WOOD FOLK AT SCHOOL

WILLIAM · J · LONG

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Wood Folk at School

"THERE AT A TURN IN THE PATH, NOT TEN YARDS AHEAD, STOOD A HUGE BEAR." See Page 157

WOOD FOLK AT SCHOOL

BY

WILLIAM J. LONG

WOOD FOLK SERIES
BOOK FOUR

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PREFACE

IT may surprise many, whose knowledge of wild animals is gained from rare, fleeting glimpses of frightened hoof or wing in the woods, to consider that there can be such a thing as a school for the Wood Folk; or that instruction has any place in the life of the wild things. Nevertheless it is probably true that education among the higher order of animals has its distinct place and value. Their knowledge, however simple, is still the result of three factors: instinct, training, and experience. Instinct only begins the work; the mother's training develops and supplements the instinct; and contact with the world, with its sudden dangers and unknown forces, finishes the process.

For many years the writer has been watching animals and recording his observations with the idea of determining, if possible, which of these three is the governing factor in the animal's life. Some of the results of this study were published last year in a book called "School of the Woods," which consisted of certain studies of animals from life, and certain theories in the form of essays to account for what the writer's eyes had seen and his own ears heard in the great wilderness among the animals.

A school reader is no place for theories; therefore that part of the book is not given here. The animal studies alone are reproduced in answer to the requests from many teachers that these be added to the Wood Folk books. From these the reader can form his own conclusions as to the relative importance of instinct and training, if he will. But there is another and a better way open: watch the purple martins for a few days when the young birds first leave the house; find a crow's nest, and watch secretly while the old birds are teaching their little ones to fly; follow a fox, or any other wild mother-animal, patiently as she leaves the den and leads the cubs out into the world of unknown sights and sounds and smells, — and you will learn more in a week of what education means to the animals than anybody's theories can ever teach you.

These are largely studies of individual animals and birds. They do not attempt to give the habits of a class or species, for the animals of the same class are alike only in a general way; they differ in interest and intelligence quite as widely as men and women of the same class, if you but watch them closely enough. The names here given are those of the Milicete Indians, as nearly as I can remember them; and the incidents have all passed under my own eyes and were recorded in the woods, from my tent or canoe, just as I saw them.

WILLIAM J. LONG.

STAMFORD, CONN., March, 1903.

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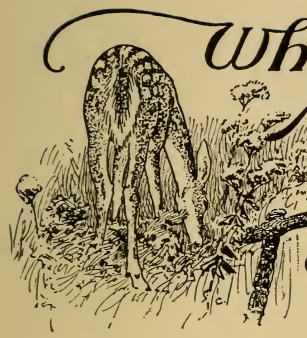


What the Fawns Must Know

TO this day it is hard to understand how any eyes could have found them, they were so perfectly hidden. I was following a little brook, which led me by its singing to a deep dingle in the very heart of the big woods. A great fallen tree lay across my path and made a bridge over the stream. Now, bridges are for crossing; that is plain to even the least of the wood folk; so I sat down on the mossy trunk to see who my neighbors might be, and what little feet were passing on the King's highway.

Here, beside me, are claw marks in the moldy bark. Only a bear could leave that deep, strong imprint. And see! there is where the moss slipped and broke beneath his weight. A restless tramp is Mooween, who scatters his records over forty miles of hillside on a summer day, when his lazy mood happens to leave him for a season. Here, on the other side, are the bronze-green petals of a spruce cone, chips from

a squirrel's workshop, scattered as if Meeko had brushed them hastily from his yellow apron when he rushed out to see Mooween as he passed. There, beyond, is a mink sign, plain as daylight, where Cheokhes sat down a little while after his breakfast of frogs. And here, clinging to a stub, touching my elbow as I sit with heels dangling idly over the lazy brook, is a crinkly yellow hair, which tells me that Eleemos the Sly One, as Simmo calls him, hates to wet his feet and so uses a fallen tree or a stone in the brook for a bridge, like his brother fox of the settlements.

Just in front of me was another fallen tree, lying alongside the stream in such a way that no animal more dangerous than a roving mink would ever think of using it. Under its roots, away from the brook, was a hidden and roomy little house with hemlock tips drooping over its doorway for a curtain. "A pretty place for a den," I thought; "for no one could ever find you there." Then, as if to contradict me, a stray sunbeam found the spot and sent curious bright glintings of sheen and shadow dancing and playing under the fallen roots and trunk. "Beautiful!" I cried, as the light fell on the brown mold and flecked it with white and yellow. The sunbeam went away again, but seemed to leave its brightness behind it;

for there were still the gold-brown mold under the roots and the flecks of white and yellow. I stooped down to see it better; I reached in my hand — then the brown mold changed suddenly to softest fur; the glintings of white and yellow were the dappled sides of two little fawns, lying there very still and frightened, just where their mother had hidden them when she went away.

They were but a few days old when I found them. Each had on his little Joseph's coat; and each, I think, must have had also a magic cloak somewhere about him; for he had only to lie down anywhere to become invisible. The curious markings, like the play of light and shadow through the leaves, hid the little owners perfectly so long as they held themselves still and let the sunbeams dance over them. Their beautiful heads were a study for an artist, — delicate, graceful, exquisitely colored. And their great soft eyes had a questioning innocence, as they met yours, which went straight to your heart and made you claim the beautiful creatures for your own instantly. Indeed, there is nothing in all the woods that so takes your heart by storm as the face of a little fawn.

They were timid at first, lying close without motion of any kind. The instinct of obedience — the first and strongest instinct of every creature born into this

world — kept them loyal to the mother's command to stay where they were and be still till she came back. So even after the hemlock curtain was brushed aside, and my eyes saw and my hand touched them, they kept their heads flat to the ground and pretended that they were only parts of the brown forest floor, and that the spots on their bright coats were but flecks of summer sunshine.

I felt then that I was an intruder; that I ought to go straight away and leave them; but the little things were too beautiful, lying there in their wonderful old den, with fear and wonder and questionings dancing in their soft eyes as they turned them back at me like a mischievous child playing peekaboo. It is a tribute to our higher nature that one cannot see a beautiful thing anywhere without wanting to draw near, to see, to touch, to possess it. And here was beauty such as one rarely finds, and, though I was an intruder, I could not go away.

The hand that touched the little wild things brought no sense of danger with it. It searched out the spots behind their velvet ears where they love to be rubbed; it wandered down over their backs with a little wavy caress in its motion; it curled its palm up softly under their moist muzzles and brought their tongues out instantly for the faint suggestion of salt that was in

it. Suddenly their heads came up. All deception was over now. They had forgotten their hiding, their first lesson; they turned and looked at me full with their great, innocent, questioning eyes. It was wonderful; I was undone. One must give his life, if need be, to defend the little things after they had looked at him just once like that.

When I rose at last, after petting them to my heart's content, they staggered up to their feet and came out of their house. Their mother had told them to stay; but here was another big, kind animal, evidently, whom they might safely trust. "Take the gifts the gods provide thee" was the thought in their little heads; and the salty taste in their tongues' ends, when they licked my hand, was the nicest thing they had ever known. As I turned away they ran after me, with a plaintive little cry to bring me back. When I stopped they came close, nestling against me, one on either side, and lifted their heads to be petted and rubbed again.

Standing so, all eagerness and wonder, they were a perfect study in first impressions of the world. Their ears had already caught the deer trick of twitching nervously and making trumpets at every sound. A leaf rustled, a twig broke, the brook's song swelled as a floating stick jammed in the current, and instantly the fawns were all alert. Eyes,

ears, noses questioned the phenomenon. Then they would raise their eyes slowly to mine. "This is a wonderful world. This big wood is full of music. We know so little; please tell us all about it," — that is what the beautiful eyes were saying as they lifted up to mine, full of innocence and delight at the joy of living. Then the hands that rested fondly, one on either soft neck, moved down from their ears with a caressing sweep and brought up under their moist muzzles. Instantly the wood and its music vanished; the questions ran away out of their eyes. Their eager tongues were out, and all the unknown sounds were forgotten in the new sensation of lapping a man's palm, which had a wonderful taste hidden somewhere under its friendly roughnesses. They were still licking my hands, nestling close against me, when a twig snapped faintly far behind us.

Now, twig snapping is the great index to all that passes in the wilderness. Curiously enough, no two animals can break even a twig under their feet and give the same warning. The *crack* under a bear's foot, except when he is stalking his game, is heavy and heedless. The hoof of a moose crushes a twig, and chokes the sound of it before it can tell its message fairly. When a twig speaks under a deer in his passage through the woods, the sound is sharp, dainty,

alert. It suggests the *plop* of a raindrop into the lake. And the sound behind us now could not be mistaken. The mother of my little innocents was coming.

I hated to frighten her, and through her to destroy their new confidence; so I hurried back to the den, the little ones running close by my side. Ere I was halfway, a twig snapped sharply again; there was a swift rustle in the underbrush, and a doe sprang out with a low bleat as she saw the home log.

At sight of me she stopped short, trembling violently, her ears pointing forward like two accusing fingers, an awful fear in her soft eyes as she saw her little ones with her archenemy between them, his hands resting on their innocent necks. Her body swayed away, every muscle tense for the jump; but her feet seemed rooted to the spot. Slowly she swayed back to her balance, her eyes holding mine; then away again as the danger scent poured into her nose. But still the feet stayed. She could not move; could not believe. Then, as I waited quietly and tried to make my eyes say all sorts of friendly things, the harsh, throaty *K-a-a-a-h! k-a-a-a-h!* the danger cry of the deer, burst like a trumpet blast through the woods, and she leaped back to cover.

At the sound the little ones jumped as if stung, and plunged into the brush in the opposite direction.

But the strange place frightened them; the hoarse cry that went crashing through the startled woods filled them with nameless dread. In a moment they were back again, nestling close against me, growing quiet as the hands stroked their sides without tremor or hurry.

Around us, out of sight, ran the fear-haunted mother, calling, calling; now showing her head, with the terror deep in her eyes; now dashing away, with her white flag up, to show her little ones the way they must take. But the fawns gave no heed after the first alarm. They felt the change; their ears were twitching nervously, and their eyes, which had not yet grown quick enough to measure distances and find their mother in her hiding, were full of strange terror as they questioned mine. Still, under the alarm, they felt the kindness which the poor mother, dog-driven and waylaid by guns, had never known. Therefore they stayed, with a deep wisdom beyond all her cunning, where they knew they were safe.

I led them slowly back to their hiding place, gave them a last lick at my hands, and pushed them gently under the hemlock curtain. When they tried to come out I pushed them back again. "Stay there, and mind your mother; stay there, and follow your mother," I kept whispering. And to this day I have

"THE WHITE FLAG SHOWING LIKE A BEACON LIGHT AS SHE JUMPED AWAY"

a half belief that they understood, not the word but the feeling behind it; for they grew quiet after a time and looked out with wide-open, wondering eyes. Then I dodged out of sight, jumped the fallen log to throw them off the scent should they come out, crossed the brook, and glided out of sight into the underbrush. Once safely out of hearing I headed straight for the open, a few yards away, where the blasted stems of the burned hillside showed faintly through the green of the big woods, and climbed, and looked, and changed my position, till at last I could see the fallen tree under whose roots my little innocents were hiding.

The hoarse danger cry had ceased; the woods were all still again. A movement in the underbrush, and I saw the doe glide out beyond the brook and stand looking, listening. She bleated softly; the hemlock curtain was thrust aside, and the little ones came out. At sight of them she leaped forward, a great gladness showing eloquently in every line of her graceful body, rushed up to them, dropped her head and ran her keen nose over them, ears to tail and down their sides and back again, to be sure that they were her own little ones and were not harmed. All the while the fawns nestled close to her, as they had done a moment before to me, and lifted their heads to touch her sides

with their noses, and ask in their own dumb way what it was all about, and why she had run away.

Then, as the smell of the man came to her from the tainted underbrush, the absolute necessity of teaching them their neglected second lesson before another danger should find them swept over her in a flood. She sprang aside with a great bound, and the hoarse *K-a-a-a-h! k-a-a-a-h!* crashed through the woods again. Her tail was straight up, the white flag showing like a beacon light as she jumped away. Behind her the fawns stood startled a moment, trembling with a new wonder. Then their flags went up too, and they wabbled away on slender legs through the tangles and over the rough places of the wood, bravely following their leader. And I, watching from my hiding, with a vague regret that they could never again be mine, not even for a moment, saw only the crinkling lines of underbrush and here and there the flash of a little white flag. So they went up the hill and out of sight.

First, lie still; and second, follow the white flag. When I saw them again it needed no danger cry of the mother to remind them of these two things that every fawn must know who would live to grow up in the big woods.

A Cry in the Night

THIS is the rest of the story, just as I saw it, of the little fawns that I found under the mossy log by the brook. There were two of them, you remember; and though they looked alike at first glance, I soon found out that there is just as much difference in fawns as there is in folks. Eyes, faces, dispositions, characters, — in all things they were as unlike as the virgins of the parable. One of them was wise, and the other was very foolish. The one was a follower, a learner; he never forgot his second lesson, to follow the white flag. The other followed from the first only his own willful head and feet, and discovered too late that obedience is life. Until the bear found him, I have no doubt he was thinking, in his own dumb, foolish way, that obedience is only for the weak and ignorant, and that government is only

an unfair advantage which all the wilderness mothers take to keep little wild things from doing as they please.

The wise old mother took them both away when she knew I had found them, and hid them in a deeper solitude of the big woods, nearer the lake, where she could the sooner reach them from her feeding grounds. For days after the wonderful discovery I used to go in the early morning or the late afternoon, while mother deer are away feeding along the watercourses, and search the dingle from one end to the other, hoping to find the little ones again and win their confidence. But they were not there; and I took to watching instead a family of mink that lived in a den under a root, and a big owl that always slept in the same hemlock. Then, one day when a flock of partridges led me out of the wild berry bushes into a cool green island of the burned lands, I ran plump upon the deer and her fawns lying all together under a fallen treetop, dozing away the heat of the day.

They did not see me, but were only scared into action as a branch, upon which I stood looking for my partridges, gave way beneath my feet and let me down with a great crash under the fallen tree. There, looking out, I could see them perfectly, while Kookooskoos himself could hardly have seen me. At the

first crack they all jumped like Jack-in-a-box when you touch his spring. The mother put up her white flag — which is the snowy underside of her useful tail, and shows like a beacon by day or night — and bounded away with a hoarse *Ka-a-a-a-h!* of warning. One of the little ones followed her on the instant, jumping squarely in his mother's tracks, his own little white flag flying to guide any that might come after him. But the second fawn ran off at a tangent, and stopped in a moment to stare and whistle and stamp his tiny foot in an odd mixture of curiosity and defiance. The mother had to circle back twice before he followed her, at last, unwillingly. As she stole back each time, her tail was down and wiggling nervously — which is the sure sign, when you see it, that some scent of you is floating off through the woods and telling its warning into the deer's keen nostrils. But when she jumped away the white flag was straight up, flashing in the very face of her foolish fawn, telling him as plain as any language what sign he must follow if he would escape danger and avoid breaking his legs in the tangled underbrush.

I did not understand till long afterwards, when I had watched the fawns many times, how important is this latter suggestion. One who follows a frightened deer and sees or hears him go bounding off

at breakneck pace over loose rocks and broken trees and tangled underbrush; rising swift on one side of a windfall without knowing what lies on the other side till he is already falling; driving like an arrow over ground where you must follow like a snail, lest you wrench a foot or break an ankle, — finds himself asking with unanswered wonder how any deer can live half a season in the wilderness without breaking all his legs. And when you run upon a deer at night and hear him go smashing off in the darkness at the same reckless speed, over a tangled blow-down, perhaps, through which you can barely force your way by daylight, then you realize suddenly that the most wonderful part of a deer's education shows itself, not in keen eyes or trumpet ears, or in his finely trained nose, more sensitive a hundred times than any barometer, but in his forgotten feet, which seem to have eyes and nerves and brains packed into their hard shells instead of the senseless matter you see there.

Watch the doe yonder as she bounds away, wig-wagging her heedless little one to follow. She is thinking only of him; and now you see her feet free to take care of themselves. As she rises over the big windfall, they hang from the ankle joints, limp as a glove out of which the hand has been drawn, yet seeming to wait and watch. One hoof touches a

twig; like lightning it spreads and drops, after running for the smallest fraction of a second along the obstacle to know whether to relax or stiffen, or rise or fall to meet it. Just before she strikes the ground on the down plunge, see the wonderful hind hoofs sweep themselves forward, surveying the ground by touch, and bracing themselves, in a fraction of time so small that the eye cannot follow, for the shock of what lies beneath them, whether rock or rotten wood or yielding moss. The fore feet have followed the quick eyes above, and shoot straight and sure to their landing; but the hind hoofs must find the spot for themselves as they come down and, almost ere they find it, brace themselves again for the push of the mighty muscles above.

Once only I found where a fawn with untrained feet had broken its leg; and once I heard of a wounded buck, driven to death by dogs, that had fallen in the same way never to rise again. Those were rare cases. The marvel is that it does not happen to every deer that fear drives through the wilderness.

And that is another reason why the fawns must learn to obey a wiser head than their own. Till their little feet are educated, the mother must choose the way for them; and a wise fawn will jump squarely in her tracks. That explains also why deer, even after

they are full grown, will often walk in single file, a half-dozen of them sometimes following a wise leader, stepping in his tracks and leaving but a single trail. It is partly, perhaps, to fool their old enemy, the wolf, and their new enemy, the man, by hiding the weakling's trail in the stride and hoof mark of a big buck; but it shows also the old habit, and the training which begins when the fawns first learn to follow the flag.

After that second discovery I used to go in the afternoon to a point on the lake nearest the fawns' hiding place, and wait in my canoe for the mother to come out and show me where she had left her little ones. As they grew, and the drain upon her increased from their feeding, she seemed always half starved. Waiting in my canoe I would hear the crackle of brush, as she trotted straight down to the lake almost heedlessly, and see her plunge through the fringe of bushes that bordered the water. With scarcely a look or a sniff to be sure the coast was clear, she would jump for the lily pads. Sometimes the canoe was in plain sight; but she gave no heed as she tore up the juicy buds and stems, and swallowed them with the appetite of a famished wolf. Then I would paddle away and, taking my direction from her trail as she came, hunt diligently for the fawns until I found them.

This last happened only two or three times. The little ones were already wild; they had forgotten all about our first meeting, and when I showed myself, or cracked a twig too near them, they would promptly bolt into the brush. One always ran straight away, his white flag flying to show that he remembered his lesson; the other went off zigzag, stopping at every angle of his run to look back and question me with his eyes and ears.

There was only one way in which such disobedience could end. I saw it plainly enough one afternoon, when, had I been one of the fierce prowlers of the wilderness, the little fellow's history would have stopped short under the paw of Upweekis, the shadowy lynx of the burned lands. It was late afternoon when I came over a ridge, following a deer path on my way to the lake, and looked down into a long narrow valley filled with berry bushes, and with a few fire-blasted trees standing here and there to point out the perfect loneliness and desolation of the place.

Just below me a deer was feeding hungrily, only her hind quarters showing out of the underbrush. I watched her awhile, then dropped on all fours and began to creep towards her, to see how near I could get and what new trait I might discover. But at the first motion (I had stood at first like an old stump on

the ridge) a fawn that had evidently been watching me all the time from his hiding sprang into sight with a sharp whistle of warning. The doe threw up her head, looking straight at me as if she had understood more from the signal than I had thought possible. There was not an instant's hesitation or searching. Her eyes went direct to me, as if the fawn's cry had said: "Behind you, mother, in the path by the second gray rock!" Then she jumped away, shooting up the opposite hill over roots and rocks as if thrown by steel springs, blowing hoarsely at every jump, and followed in splendid style by her watchful little one.

At the first snort of danger there was a rush in the underbrush near where she had stood, and a second fawn sprang into sight. I knew him instantly — the heedless one — and knew also that he had neglected too long the matter of following the flag. He was confused, frightened, chuckle-headed now; he came darting up the deer path in the wrong direction, straight towards me, to within two jumps, before he noticed the man kneeling in the path before him and watching him quietly.

At the startling discovery he stopped short, seeming to shrink smaller and smaller before my eyes. Then he edged sidewise to a great stump, hid himself among the roots, and stood stock-still, — a beautiful picture of

innocence and curiosity, framed in the rough brown roots of the spruce stump. It was his first teaching, to hide and be still. Just as he needed it most, he had forgotten absolutely the second lesson.

We watched each other full five minutes without moving an eyelash. Then his first lesson ebbed away. He sidled out into the path again, came towards me two dainty, halting steps, and stamped prettily with his left fore foot. He was a young buck, and had that trick of stamping without any instruction. It is an old, old ruse to make you move, to startle you by the sound and threatening motion into showing who you are and what are your intentions.

But still the man did not move; the fawn grew frightened at his own boldness and ran away down the path. Far up the opposite hill I heard the mother calling him. But he heeded not; he wanted to find out things for himself. There he was in the path again, watching me. I took out my handkerchief and waved it gently; at which great marvel he trotted back, stopping anon to look and stamp his little foot, to show me that he was not afraid.

"Brave little chap, I like you," I thought, my heart going out to him as he stood there with his soft eyes and beautiful face, stamping his little foot. "But what," my thoughts went on, "had happened to you

ere now, had a bear or lucivee lifted his head over the ridge? Next month, alas! the law will be off; then there will be hunters in these woods, some of whom leave their hearts, with their wives and children, behind them. You can't trust them, believe me, little chap. Your mother is right; you can't trust them."

The night was coming swiftly. The mother's call, growing ever more anxious, more insistent, swept over the darkening hillside. "Perhaps," I thought, with sudden twinges and alarms of conscience, "perhaps I set you all wrong, little chap, in giving you the taste of salt that day, and teaching you to trust things that meet you in the wilderness." That is generally the way when we meddle with Mother Nature, who has her own good reasons for doing things as she does. "But no! there were two of you under the old log that day; and the other, — he 's up there with his mother now, where you ought to be, — he knows that old laws are safer than new thoughts, especially new thoughts in the heads of foolish youngsters. You are all wrong, little chap, for all your pretty curiosity, and the stamp of your little foot that quite wins my heart. Perhaps I am to blame, after all; anyway, I 'll teach you better now."

At the thought I picked up a large stone and sent it crashing, jumping, tearing down the hillside straight

at him. All his bravado vanished like a wink. Up went his flag, and away he went over the logs and rocks of the great hillside; where presently I heard his mother running in a great circle till she found him with her nose, thanks to the wood wires and the wind's message, and led him away out of danger.

One who lives for a few weeks in the wilderness, with eyes and ears open, soon finds that, instead of the lawlessness and blind chance which seem to hold sway there, he lives in the midst of law and order — an order of things much older than that to which he is accustomed, with which it is not well to interfere. I was uneasy, following the little deer path through the twilight stillness; and my uneasiness was not decreased when I found on a log, within fifty yards of the spot where the fawn first appeared, the signs of a big lucivee, with plenty of fawn's hair and fine-cracked bones to tell me what he had eaten for his midnight dinner.

Down at the lower end of the same deer path, where it stopped at the lake to let the wild things drink, was a little brook. Outside the mouth of this brook, among the rocks, was a deep pool; and in the pool lived some big trout. I was there one night, some two weeks later, trying to catch some of the big trout for my next breakfast.

Those were wise fish. It was of no use to angle for them by day any more. They knew all the flies in my book; could tell the new Jenny Lind from the old Bumble Bee before it struck the water; and seemed to know perfectly, both by instinct and experience, that they were all frauds, which might as well be called Jenny Bee and Bumble Lind for any sweet reasonableness that was in them. Besides all this, the water was warm; the trout were logy and would not rise.

By night, however, the case was different. A few of the trout would leave the pool and prowl along the shores in shallow water to see what tidbits the darkness might bring, in the shape of night bugs and careless piping frogs and sleepy minnows. Then, if you built a fire on the beach and cast a white-winged fly across the path of the firelight, you would sometimes get a big one.

It was fascinating sport always, whether the trout were rising or not. One had to fish with his ears, and keep most of his wits in his hand, ready to strike quick and hard when the moment came, after an hour of casting. Half the time you would not see your fish at all, but only hear the savage plunge as he swirled down with your fly. At other times, as you struck sharply at the plunge, your fly would come

back to you, or tangle itself up in unseen snags; and far out, where the verge of the firelight rippled away into darkness, you would see a sharp wave-wedge shooting away, which told you that your trout was only a musquash. Swimming quietly by, he had seen you and your fire, and slapped his tail down hard on the water to make you jump. That is a way Musquash has in the night, so that he can make up his mind what queer thing you are and what you are doing.

All the while, as you fish, the great dark woods stand close about you, silent, listening. The air is full of scents and odors that steal abroad only by night, while the air is dew-laden. Strange cries, calls, squeaks, rustlings run along the hillside, or float in from the water, or drop down from the air overhead, to make you guess and wonder what wood folk are abroad at such unseemly hours, and what they are about. So that it is good to fish by night, as well as by day, and go home with heart and head full, even though your creel be empty.

I was standing very still by my fire, waiting for a big trout that had risen and missed my fly to regain his confidence, when I heard cautious rustlings in the brush behind me. I turned instantly, and there were two great glowing spots, the eyes of a deer, flashing

out of the dark woods. A swift rustle, and two more coals glow lower down, flashing and scintillating with strange colors; and then two more; and I know that the doe and her fawns are there, stopped and fascinated on their way to drink by the great wonder of the light, and by the witchery of the dancing shadows that rush up at timid wild things, as if to frighten them, but only jump over them and back again, as if inviting them to join the silent play.

I knelt down quietly beside my fire, slipping on a great roll of birch bark which blazed up brightly, filling the woods with light. There, under a spruce, where a dark shadow had been a moment agone, stood the mother, her eyes all ablaze with the wonder of the light; now staring steadfastly into the fire; now starting nervously, with low questioning snorts, as a troop of shadows ran up to play hop-scotch with the little ones, which stood close behind her, one on either side.

A moment only it lasted. Then one fawn — I knew the heedless one, even in the firelight, by his face and by his bright-dappled Joseph's coat — came straight towards me, stopping to stare with flashing eyes when the fire jumped up, and then to stamp his little foot at the shadows to show them that he was not afraid.

"HER EYES ALL ABLAZE WITH THE WONDER OF THE LIGHT"

The mother called him anxiously; but still he came on, stamping prettily. She grew uneasy, trotting back and forth in a half circle, warning, calling, pleading. Then, as he came between her and the fire, and his little shadow stretched away up the hill where she was, showing how far away he was from her and how near the light, she broke away from its fascination with an immense effort: *Ka-a-a-h! ka-a-a-h!* the hoarse cry rang through the startled woods like a pistol shot; and she bounded away, her white flag shining like a wave crest in the night to guide her little ones.

The second fawn followed her instantly; but the heedless one barely swung his head to see where she was going, and then came on towards the light, staring and stamping in foolish wonder.

I watched him a little while, fascinated myself by his beauty, his dainty motions, his soft ears with a bright oval of light about them, his wonderful eyes glowing like burning rainbows kindled by the firelight. Far behind him the mother's cry ran back and forth along the hillside. Suddenly it changed; a danger note leaped into it; and again I heard the call to follow and the crash of brush as she leaped away. I remembered the lynx and the sad little history written on the log above. As the quickest way

of saving the foolish youngster, I kicked my fire to pieces and walked out towards him. Then, as the wonder vanished in darkness and the scent of the man poured up to him on the lake's breath, the little fellow bounded away — alas! straight up the deer path, at right angles to the course his mother had taken a moment before.

Five minutes later I heard the mother calling a strange note in the direction he had taken, and went up the deer path very quietly to investigate. At the top of the ridge, where the path dropped away into a dark narrow valley with dense underbrush on either side, I heard the fawn answering her, below me among the big trees, and knew instantly that something had happened. He called continuously, a plaintive cry of distress, in the black darkness of the spruces. The mother ran around him in a great circle, calling him to come; while he lay helpless in the same spot, telling her he could not, and that she must come to him. So the cries went back and forth in the listening night, — *Hoo-wuh*, "come here." *Bla-a-a*, *blr-r-t*, "I can't; come here." *Ka-a-a-h*, *ka-a-a-h!* "danger, follow!" — and then the crash of brush as she rushed away followed by the second fawn, whom she must save, though she abandoned the heedless one to prowlers of the night.

It was clear enough what had happened. The cries of the wilderness all have their meaning, if one but knows how to interpret them. Running through the dark woods his untrained feet had missed their landing, and he lay now under some rough windfall, with a broken leg to remind him of the lesson he had neglected so long.

I was stealing along towards him, feeling my way among the trees in the darkness, stopping every moment to listen to his cry to guide me, when a heavy rustle came creeping down the hill and passed close before me. Something, perhaps, in the sound — a heavy, though almost noiseless onward push which only one creature in the woods can possibly make — something, perhaps, in a faint new odor in the moist air told me instantly that keener ears than mine had heard the cry; that Mooween the bear had left his blueberry patch, and was stalking the heedless fawn, whom he knew, by the hearing of his ears, to have become separated from his watchful mother in the darkness.

I regained the path silently — though Mooween heeds nothing when his game is afoot — and ran back to the canoe for my rifle. Ordinarily a bear is timid as a rabbit; but I had never met one so late at night before, and knew not how he would act

should I take his game away. Besides, there is everything in the feeling with which one approaches an animal. If one comes timidly, doubtfully, the animal knows it; and if one comes swift, silent, resolute, with his power gripped tight, and the hammer back, and a forefinger resting lightly on the trigger guard, the animal knows it too, you may depend. Anyway, they always act as if they knew; and you may safely follow the rule that, whatever your feeling is, whether fear or doubt or confidence, the large and dangerous animals will sense it instantly and adopt the opposite feeling for their rule of action. That is the way I have always found it in the wilderness. I met a bear once on a narrow path — but I must tell about that elsewhere.

The cries had ceased; the woods were all dark and silent when I came back. I went as swiftly as possible — without heed or caution; for whatever crackling I made the bear would attribute to the desperate mother — to the spot where I had turned back. Thence I went on cautiously, taking my bearings from one great tree on the ridge that lifted its bulk against the sky; slower and slower, till, just this side a great windfall, a twig cracked sharply under my foot. It was answered instantly by a grunt and a jump beyond the windfall — and then the crashing rush of a bear up

the hill, carrying something that caught and swished loudly on the bushes as it passed, till the sounds vanished in a faint rustle far away, and the woods were still again.

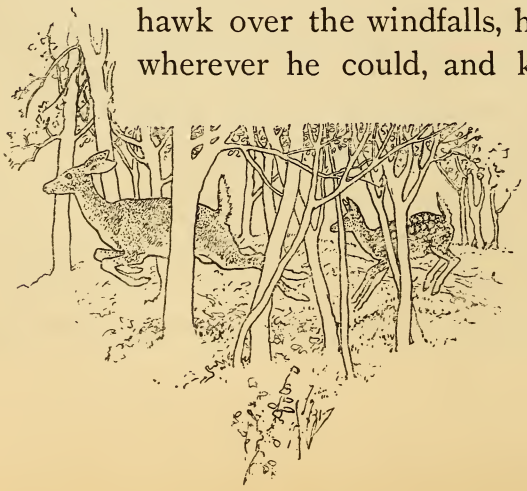
All night long, from my tent over beyond an arm of the big lake, I heard the mother calling at intervals. She seemed to be running back and forth along the ridge, above where the tragedy had occurred. Her nose told her of the bear and the man; but what awful thing they were doing with her little one she knew not. Fear and questioning were in the calls that floated down the ridge and across the water to my little tent.

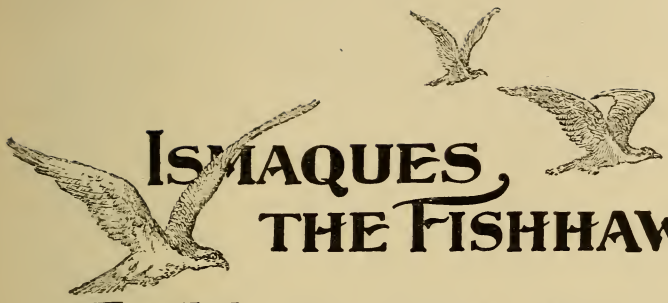
At daylight I went back to the spot. I found without trouble where the fawn had fallen; the moss told mutely of his struggle; and a stain or two showed where Mooween grabbed him. The rest was a plain trail of crushed moss and bent grass and stained leaves, and a tuft of soft hair here and there on the jagged ends of knots in the old windfalls. So the trail hurried up the hill into a wild, rough country where it was of no use to follow.

As I climbed the last ridge on my way back to the lake, I heard rustlings in the underbrush, and then the unmistakable crack of a twig under a deer's foot. The mother had winded me; she was now following

and circling down wind to find out whether her lost fawn were with me. As yet she knew not what had happened. The bear had frightened her into extra care of the one fawn of whom she was sure. The other had simply vanished into the silence and mystery of the great woods.

Where the path turned downward, in sight of the lake, I saw her for a moment plainly, standing half hid in the underbrush, looking intently at my old canoe. She saw me at the same instant and bounded away, quartering up the hill in my direction. Near a thicket of evergreen that I had just passed, she sounded her hoarse *K-a-a-h*, *k-a-a-h !* and threw up her flag. There was a rush within the thicket; a sharp *K-a-a-h !* answered hers. Then the second fawn burst out of the cover where she had hidden him, and darted along the ridge after her, jumping like a big red fox from rock to rock, rising like a hawk over the windfalls, hitting her tracks wherever he could, and keeping his little nose hard down to his one needful lesson of following the white flag.





ISMAQUES, THE FISHHAWK

Whit, whit, ch'wee? Whit, whit, whit, ch'weeeeee! over my head went the shrill whistling, the hunting cry of Ismaques. Looking up from my fishing I could see the broad wings sweeping over me, and catch the bright gleam of his eye as he looked down into my canoe, or behind me at the cold place among the rocks, to see if I were catching anything. Then, as he noted the pile of fish, — a blanket of silver on the black rocks, where I was stowing away chub for bear bait, — he would drop lower in amazement to see how I did it. When the trout were not rising, and his keen glance saw no gleam of red and gold in my canoe, he would circle off with a cheery *K'weee!* the good-luck call of a brother fisherman. For there is no envy nor malice nor any uncharitableness in Ismaques. He lives in harmony with the world, and seems glad when you land a big one, even though he be hungry himself,

and the clamor from his nest, where his little ones are crying, be too keen for his heart's content.

What is there in going a-fishing, I wonder, that seems to change even the leopard's spots, and that puts a new heart into the man who hies him away to the brook when buds are swelling? There is Kee-onekh the otter. Before he turned fisherman he was probably fierce, cruel, bloodthirsty, with a vile smell about him, like all the other weasels. Now he lives at peace with all the world and is clean, gentle, playful as a kitten and faithful as a dog when you make a pet of him. And there is Ismaques the fishhawk. Before he turned fisherman he was probably hated, like every other hawk, for his fierceness and his bandit ways. The shadow of his wings was the signal for hiding to all the timid ones. Jay and crow cried *Thief! thief!* and kingbird sounded his war cry and rushed out to battle. Now the little birds build their nests among the sticks of his great house, and the shadow of his wings is a sure protection. For owl and hawk and wild-cat have learned long since the wisdom of keeping well away from Ismaques' dwelling.

Not only the birds, but men also, feel the change in Ismaques' disposition. I hardly know a hunter who will not go out of his way for a shot at a hawk; but they send a hearty good-luck after this winged

fisherman of the same fierce family, even though they see him rising heavily out of the very pool where the big trout live, and where they expect to cast their flies at sundown. Along the southern New England shores his coming — regular as the calendar itself — is hailed with delight by the fishermen. One state, at least, where he is most abundant, protects him by law; and even our Puritan forefathers, who seem to have neither made nor obeyed any game laws, looked upon him with a kindly eye, and made him an exception to the general license for killing. To their credit, be it known, they once "publikly reeprimanded" one Master Eliphalet Bodman, a son of Belial evidently, for violently, with powder and shot, doing away with one fishhawk, and wickedly destroying the nest and eggs of another.

Whether this last were also done violently, with powder and shot, by blowing the nest to pieces with an old gun, or in simple boy-fashion by shinning up the tree, the quaint old town record does not tell. But all this goes to show that our ancestors of the coast were kindly people at heart; that they looked upon this brave, simple fisherman, who built his nest by their doors, much as the German village people look upon the stork that builds upon their chimneys, and regarded his coming as an omen of good luck and plenty to the fisher folk.

Far back in the wilderness, where Ismaques builds his nest and goes a-fishing just as his ancestors did a thousand years ago, one finds the same honest bird, unspoiled alike by plenty or poverty, that excited our boyish imagination and won the friendly regard of our ancestors of the coast. Opposite my camp on the lake, where I tarried long one summer, charmed by the beauty of the place and the good fishing, a pair of fishhawks had built their nest in the top of a great spruce on the mountain side. It was this pair of birds that came daily to circle over my canoe, or over the rocks where I fished for chub, to see how I fared, and to send back a cheery *Ch'wee! chip, ch'weeee!* "good luck and good fishing," as they wheeled away. It would take a good deal of argument now to convince me that they did not at last recognize me as a fellow-fisherman, and were not honestly interested in my methods and success.

At first I went to the nest, not so much to study the fishhawks as to catch fleeting glimpses of a shy, wild life of the woods, which is hidden from most eyes. The fishing was good, and both birds were expert fishermen. While the young were growing there was always an abundance in the big nest on the spruce top. The overflow of this abundance, in the shape of heads, bones and unwanted remnants,

was cast over the sides of the nest and furnished savory pickings for a score of hungry prowlers. Mink came over from frog hunting in the brook, drawn by the good smell in the air. Skunks lumbered down from the hill, with a curious, hollow, bumping sound to announce their coming. Weasels, and one grizzly old pine marten, too slow or rheumatic for successful tree hunting, glided out of the underbrush and helped themselves without asking leave. Wild-cats quarreled like fiends over the pickings; more than once I heard them there screeching in the night. And one late afternoon, as I lingered in my hiding among the rocks while the shadows deepened, a big lucivee stole out of the bushes, as if ashamed of himself, and took to nosing daintily among the fish bones.

It was his first appearance, evidently. He did not know that the feast was free, but thought all the while that he was stealing somebody's catch. One could see it all in his attitudes, his starts and listenings, his low growlings to himself. He was bigger than anybody else there, and had no cause to be afraid; but there is a tremendous respect among all animals for the chase law and the rights of others; and the big cat felt it. He was hungry for fish; but, big as he was, his every movement showed that he was ready to take to his heels before the first little creature

that should rise up and screech in his face: "This is mine!" Later, when he grew accustomed to things and the fishhawks' generosity in providing a feast for all who might come in from the wilderness byways and hedges, he would come in boldly enough and claim his own; but now, moving stealthily about, halting and listening timidly, he furnished a study in animal rights that repaid in itself all the long hours of watching.

But the hawks themselves were more interesting than their unbidden guests. Ismaques, honest fellow that he is, mates for life, and comes back to the same nest year after year. The only exception to this rule that I know is in the case of a fishhawk, whom I knew well as a boy, and who lost his mate one summer by an accident. The accident came from a gun in the hands of an unthinking sportsman. The grief of Ismaques was evident, even to the unthinking. One could hear it in the lonely, questioning cry that he sent out over the still summer woods; and see it in the sweep of his wings as he went far afield to other ponds, not to fish, for Ismaques never fishes on his neighbor's preserves, but to search for his lost mate. For weeks he lingered in the old haunts, calling and searching everywhere; but at last the loneliness and the memories were too much for him. He

left the place long before the time of migration had come; and the next spring a strange couple came to the spot, repaired the old nest, and went fishing in the pond. Ordinarily the birds respect each other's fishing grounds, and especially the old nests; but this pair came and took possession without hesitation, as if they had some understanding with the former owner, who never came back again.

The old spruce on the mountain side had been occupied many years by my fishing friends. As is usually the case, it had given up its life to its bird masters. The oil from their frequent feastings had soaked into the bark; following down and down, checking the sap's rising, till at last it grew discouraged and ceased to climb. Then the tree died and gave up its branches, one by one, to repair the nest above. The jagged, broken ends showed everywhere how they had been broken off to supply the hawks' necessities.

There is a curious bit of building lore suggested by these broken branches, that one may learn for himself any springtime by watching the birds at their nest building. Large sticks are required for a foundation. The ground is strewed with such; but Ismaques never comes down to the ground if he can avoid it. Even when he drops an unusually heavy fish, in his flight above the trees, he looks after it regretfully, but never

follows. He may be hungry, but he will not set his huge hooked talons on the earth. He cannot walk, and loses all his power there. So he goes off and fishes patiently, hours long, to replace his lost catch.

When he needs sticks for his nest, he searches out a tree and breaks off the dead branches by his weight. If the stick be stubborn, he rises far above it and drops like a cannon ball, gripping it in his claws and snapping it short off at the same instant by the force of his blow. Twice I have been guided to where Ismaques and his mate were collecting material by reports like pistol shots ringing through the wood, as the great birds fell upon the dead branches and snapped them off. Once, when he came down too hard, I saw him fall almost to the ground, flapping lustily, before he found his wings and sailed away with his four-foot stick triumphantly.

There is another curious bit of bird lore that I discovered here in the autumn, when, much later than usual, I came back through the lake. Ismaques, when he goes away for the long winter at the South, does not leave his house to the mercy of the winter storms until he has first repaired it. Large fresh sticks are wedged in firmly across the top of the nest; doubtful ones are pulled out and carefully replaced, and the whole structure made shipshape for stormy weather.

This careful repair, together with the fact that the nest is always well soaked in oil, which preserves it from the rain, saves a deal of trouble for Ismaques. He builds for life and knows, when he goes away in the fall, that, barring untoward accidents, his house will be waiting for him with the quiet welcome of old associations when he comes back in the spring. Whether this is a habit of all ospreys, or only of the two on Big Squatuk Lake — who were very wise birds in other ways — I am unable to say.

What becomes of the young birds is also, to me, a mystery. The home ties are very strong, and the little ones stay with the parents much longer than most other birds do; but when the spring comes you will see only the old birds at the home nest. The young come back to the same general neighborhood, I think; but where the lake is small they never build nor trespass on the same waters. As with the kingfishers and sheldrakes, each pair of birds seem to have their own pond or portion; but by what old law of the waters they find and stake their claim is yet to be discovered.

There were two little ones in the nest when I first found it; and I used to watch them in the intervals when nothing was stirring in the underbrush near my hiding place. They were happy, whistling, little

fellows, well fed and contented with the world. At times they would stand for hours on the edge of the nest, looking down over the slanting tree-tops to the lake, finding the great rustling green world, and the passing birds, and the glinting of light on the sparkling water, and the hazy blue of the distant mountains marvelously interesting, if one could judge from their attitude and their pipings. Then a pair of broad wings would sweep into sight, and they would stretch their wings wide and break into eager whistlings, — *Pip*, *pip*, *ch'wee?* *chip*, *ch'weeeeee?* "did you get him? is he a big one, mother?" And they would stand tiptoeing gingerly about the edge of the great nest, stretching their necks eagerly for a first glimpse of the catch.

At times only one of the old birds would go a-fishing, while the other watched the nest. But when luck was poor both birds would seek the lake. At such times the mother bird, larger and stronger than the male, would fish along the shore, within sight and hearing of her little ones. The male, meanwhile, would go sweeping down the lake to the trout pools at the outlet, where the big chub lived, in search of better fishing grounds. If the wind were strong, you would see a curious bit of sea lore as he came back with his fish. He would never fly straight against the

wind, but tack back and forth, as if he had learned the trick from watching the sailor fishermen of the coast beating back into harbor. And, watching him through your glass, you would see that he always carried his fish endwise and head first, so as to present the least possible resistance to the breeze.

While the young were being fed, you were certain to gain new respect for Ismaques by seeing how well he brought up his little ones. If the fish were large, it was torn into shreds and given piecemeal to the young, each of whom waited for his turn with exemplary patience. There was no crowding or pushing for the first and biggest bite, such as you see in a nest of robins. If the fish were small, it was given entire to one of the young, who worried it down as best he could, while the mother bird swept back to the lake for another. The second nestling stood on the edge of the nest meanwhile, whistling good luck and waiting his turn, without a thought, apparently, of seizing a share from his mate beside him.

Just under the hawks a pair of jays had built their nest among the sticks of Ismaques' dwelling, and raised their young on the abundant crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. It was curious and intensely interesting to watch the change

which seemed to be going on in the jays' disposition by reason of the unusual friendship. Deedeeaskh the jay has not a friend among the wood folk. They all know he is a thief and a meddler, and hunt him away without mercy if they find him near their nests. But the great fishhawks welcomed him, trusted him; and he responded nobly to the unusual confidence. He never tried to steal from the young, not even when the mother bird was away, but contented himself with picking up the stray bits that they had left. And he more than repaid Ismaques by the sharp watch which he kept over the nest, and indeed over all the mountain side. Nothing passes in the woods without the jay's knowledge; and here he seemed, for all the world, like a watchful terrier, knowing that he had only to bark to bring a power of wing and claw sufficient to repel any danger. When prowlers came down from the mountain to feast on the heads and bones scattered about the foot of the tree, Deedeeaskh dropped down among them and went dodging about, whistling his insatiable curiosity. So long as they took only what was their own, he made no fuss about it; but he was there to watch, and he let them know sharply their mistake, if they showed any desire to cast evil eyes at the nest above.

"PRESENTLY THEY BEGAN TO SWOOP
FIERCELY AT SOME ANIMAL"

Once, as my canoe was gliding along the shore, I heard the jays' unmistakable cry of danger. The fishhawks were wheeling in great circles over the lake, watching for the glint of fish near the surface, when the cry came, and they darted away for the nest. Pushing out into the lake, I saw them sweeping above the tree-tops in swift circles, uttering short, sharp cries of anger. Presently they began to swoop fiercely at some animal — a fisher, probably — that was climbing the tree below. I stole up to see what it was; but ere I reached the place they had driven the intruder away. I heard one of the jays far off in the woods, following the robber and screaming to let the fishhawks know just where he was. The other jay sat close by her own little ones, cowering under the shadow of the great dark wings above. And presently Deedeeaskh came back, bubbling over with the excitement, whistling to them in his own way that he had followed the rascal clear to his den, and would keep a sharp watch over him in future.

When a big hawk came near, or when, on dark afternoons, a young owl took to hunting in the neighborhood, the jays sounded the alarm, and the fishhawks swept up from the lake on the instant. Whether Deedeeaskh were more concerned for his own young than for the young fishhawks I have no means of

knowing. The fishermen's actions at such times showed a curious mixture of fear and defiance. The mother would sit on the nest while Ismaques circled over it, both birds uttering a shrill, whistling challenge. But they never attacked the feathered robbers, as they had done with the fisher, and, so far as I could see, there was no need. Kookooskoos the owl and Hawahak the hawk might be very hungry; but the sight of those great wings circling over the nest and the shrill cry of defiance in their ears sent them hurriedly away to other hunting grounds.

There was only one enemy that ever seriously troubled the fishhawks; and he did it in as decent a sort of way as was possible under the circumstances. That was Cheplahgan the eagle. When he was hungry and had found nothing himself, and his two eaglets, far away in their nest on the mountain, needed a bite of fish to vary their diet, he would set his wings to the breeze and mount up till he could see both ospreys at their fishing. There, sailing in slow circles, he would watch for hours till he saw Ismaques catch a big fish, when he would drop like a bolt and hold him up at the point of his talons, like any other highwayman. It was of no use trying to escape. Sometimes Ismaques would attempt it, but the great dark wings would whirl around him and strike down a sharp and

unmistakable warning. It always ended the same way. Ismaques, being wise, would drop his fish, and the eagle would swoop down after it, often seizing it ere it reached the water. But he never injured the fishhawks, and he never disturbed the nest. So they got along well enough together. Cheplahgan had a bite of fish now and then in his own high-handed way; and honest Ismaques, who never went long hungry, made the best of a bad situation. Which shows that fishing has also taught him patience, and a wise philosophy of living.

The jays took no part in these struggles. Occasionally they cried out a sharp warning as Cheplahgan came plunging down out of the blue, over the head of Ismaques; but they seemed to know perfectly how the unequal contest must end, and they always had a deal of jabber among themselves over it, the meaning of which I could never make out.

As for myself, I am sure that Deedeeaskh could never make up his mind what to think of me. At first, when I came, he would cry out a danger note that brought the fishhawks circling over their nest, looking down into the underbrush with wild yellow eyes to see what danger threatened. But after I had hidden myself away a few times, and made no motion to disturb either the nest or the hungry prowlers that

came to feast on the fishhawks' bounty, Deedeeaskh set me down as an idle, harmless creature who would, nevertheless, bear watching. He never got over his curiosity to know what brought me there. Sometimes, when I thought him far away, I would find him suddenly on a branch just over my head, looking down at me intently. When I went away he would follow me, whistling, to my canoe; but he never called the fishhawks again, unless some unusual action of mine aroused his suspicion; and after one look they would circle away, as if they knew they had nothing to fear. They had seen me fishing so often that they thought they understood me, undoubtedly.

There was one curious habit of these birds that I had never noticed before. Occasionally, when the weather threatened a change, or when the birds and their little ones had fed full, Ismaques would mount up to an enormous altitude, where he would sail about in slow circles, his broad vans steady to the breeze, as if he were an ordinary hen hawk, enjoying himself and contemplating the world from an indifferent distance. Suddenly, with one clear, sharp whistle to announce his intention, he would drop like a plummet for a thousand feet, catch himself in mid-air, and zigzag down to the nest in the spruce top, whirling, diving, tumbling, and crying aloud the while in wild, ecstatic

exclamations, — just as a woodcock comes whirling, plunging, twittering down from a height to his brown mate in the alders below. Then Ismaques would mount up again and repeat his dizzy plunge, while his larger mate stood quiet in the spruce top, and the little fishhawks tiptoed about the edge of the nest, *pip-pipping* their wonder and delight at their own papa's dazzling performance.

This is undoubtedly one of Ismaques' springtime habits, by which he tries to win an admiring look from the keen yellow eyes of his mate; but I noticed him using it more frequently as the little fishhawks' wings spread to a wonderful length, and he was trying, with his mate, by every gentle means to induce them to leave the nest. And I have wondered — without being able at all to prove my theory — whether he were not trying in this remarkable way to make his little ones want to fly by showing them how wonderful a thing flying could be made to be.

A School for Little Fishermen

THERE came a day when, as I sat fishing among the rocks, the cry of the mother osprey changed as she came sweeping up to my fishing grounds, — *Chip, ch'wee! Chip, chip, ch'weeeee?* That was the fisherman's hail plainly enough; but there was another note in it, a look-here cry of triumph and satisfaction. Before I could turn my head, for a fish was nibbling, there came other sounds behind it, — *Pip, pip, pip, ch'weee! pip, ch'wee! pip, ch'weeee!* a curious medley, a hail of good-luck cries; and I knew without turning that two other fishermen had come to join the brotherhood.

The mother bird — one can tell her instantly by her greater size and darker breast markings — veered in as I turned to greet the newcomers, and came directly over my head, her two little ones flapping lustily behind her. Two days before, when I went down to another lake on an excursion after bigger trout, the

young fishhawks were still standing on the nest, turning a deaf ear to all the old birds' assurances that the time had come to use their big wings. The last glimpse I had of them through my glass showed me the mother bird in one tree, the father in another, each holding a fish, which they were showing the young across a tantalizing short stretch of empty air, telling the young in fishhawk language to come across and get it; while the young birds, on their part, stretched wings and necks hungrily and tried to whistle the fish over to them, as one would call a dog across the street.

In the short interval that I was absent mother wiles and mother patience had done their good work. The young were already flying well. Now they were out for their first lesson in fishing, evidently; and I stopped fishing myself, letting my bait sink into the mud — where an eel presently tangled my hooks into an old root — to see how it was done. For fishing is not an instinct with Ismaques, but a simple matter of training. As with young otters, they know only from daily experience that fish, and not grouse and rabbits, are their legitimate food. Left to themselves, especially if one should bring them up on flesh and then turn them loose, they would go straight back to the old hawk habit of hunting the woods, which is much easier. To catch fish, therefore, they must be taught from the first

day they leave the nest. And it is a fascinating experience for any man to watch the way they go about it.

The young ospreys flew heavily in short irregular circles, scanning the water with their inexperienced eyes for their first strike. Over them wheeled the mother bird on broad, even wings, whistling directions to the young neophytes, who would presently be initiated into the old sweet mysteries of going a-fishing. Fish were plenty enough; but that means nothing to a fishhawk, who must see his game reasonably near the surface before making his swoop. There was a good jump on the lake, and the sun shone brightly into it. Between the glare and the motion on the surface the young fishermen were having a hard time of it. Their eyes were not yet quick enough to tell them when to swoop. At every gleam of silver in the depths below they would stop short and cry out: *Pip!* "there he is!" *Pip, pip!* "here goes!" like a boy with his first nibble. But a short, clear whistle from the mother stopped them ere they had begun to fall; and they would flap up to her, protesting eagerly that they could catch that fellow, sure, if she would only let them try.

As they wheeled in over me on their way down the lake, one of the youngsters caught the gleam of my pile of chub among the rocks. *Pip, ch'weee!* he whistled, and down they came, both of them, like rockets. They

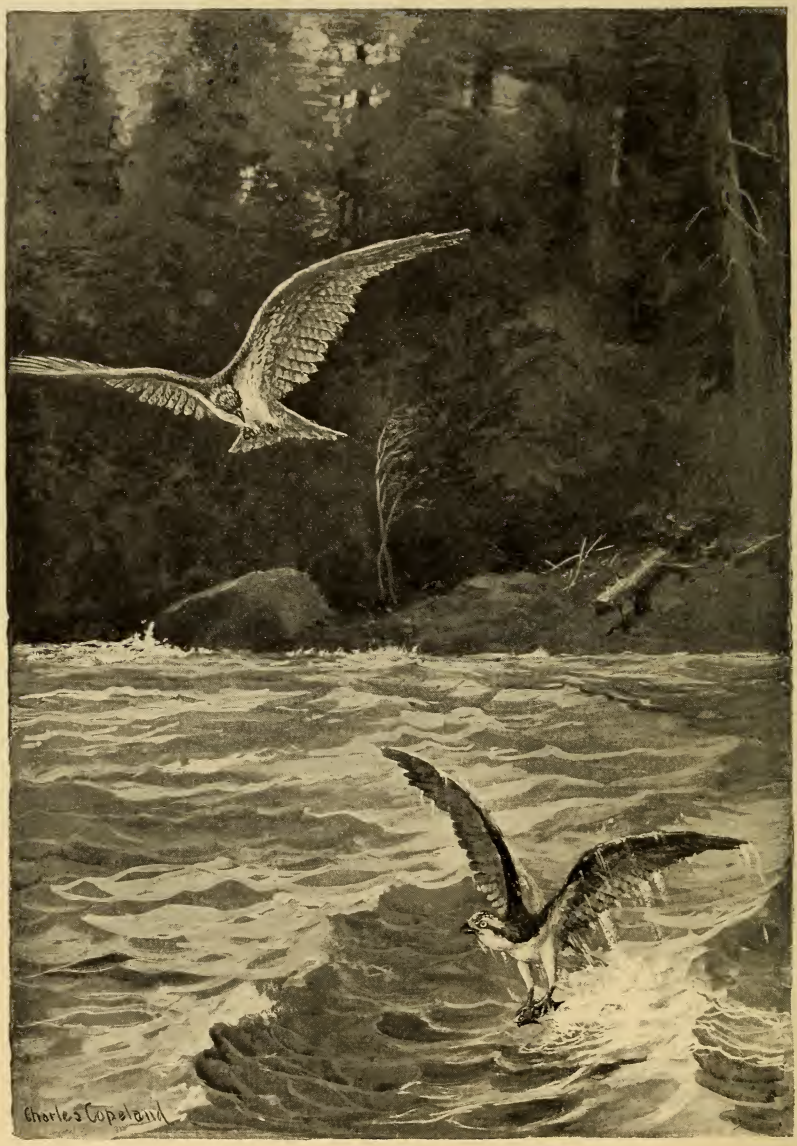
were hungry; here at hand were fish galore; and they had not noticed me at all, sitting very still among the rocks. *Pip*, *pip*, *pip*, *hurrah!* they piped as they came down.

But the mother bird, who had noted me and my pile of fish the first thing as she rounded the point, swept in swiftly with a curious, half-angry, half-anxious chiding that I had never heard from her before, — *Chip*, *chip*, *chip! Chip! Chip!* — growing sharper and shriller at each repetition, till they heeded it and swerved aside. As I looked up they were just over my head, looking down at me now with eager, wondering eyes. Then they were led aside in a wide circle and talked to with wise, quiet whistlings before they were sent back to their fishing again.

And now as they sweep round and round over the edge of a shoal, one of the little fellows sees a fish and drops lower to follow it. The mother sees it too; notes that the fish is slanting up to the surface, and wisely lets the young fisherman alone. He is too near the water now; the glare and the dancing waves bother him; he loses his gleam of silver in the flash of a white-cap. Mother bird mounts higher, and whistles him up where he can see better. But there is the fish again, and the youngster, hungry and heedless, sets his wings for a swoop. *Chip*, *chip!* "wait, he 's going

down," cautions the mother; but the little fellow, too hungry to wait, shoots down like an arrow. He is a yard above the surface when a big whitecap jumps up at him and frightens him. He hesitates, swerves, flaps lustily to save himself. Then under the whitecap is a gleam of silver again. Down he goes on the instant, — *ugh ! boo !* — like a boy taking his first dive. He is out of sight for a full moment, while two waves race over him, and I hold my breath waiting for him to come up. Then he bursts out, sputtering and shaking himself, and of course without his fish.

As he rises heavily the mother, who has been circling over him whistling advice and comfort, stops short with a single blow of her pinions against the air. She has seen the same fish, watched him shoot away under the plunge of her little one, and now sees him glancing up to the edge of the shoal where the minnows are playing. She knows that the young pupils are growing discouraged, and that the time has come to hearten them. *Chip, chip !* — "watch, I 'll show you," she whistles — *Cheeeep !* with a sharp up-slide at the end, which I soon grow to recognize as the signal to strike. At the cry she sets her wings and shoots downward with strong, even plunge, strikes a wave squarely as it rises, passes under it, and is out on the other side gripping a big chub. The little ones follow



"GRIPPING HIS FISH AND *PIP-PIPPING*
HIS EXULTATION"

her, whistling their delight, and telling her that perhaps now they will go back to the nest and take a look at the fish before they go on with their fishing. Which means, of course, that they will eat it and go to sleep perfectly satisfied with the good fun of fishing; and then lessons are over for the day.

The mother, however, has other thoughts in her wise head. She knows that the little ones are not yet tired, only hungry; and that there is much to teach them before the chub stop shoaling and fishhawks must be off to the coast. She knows also that they have thus far missed the two things she brought them out to learn: to take a fish always as he comes up; and to hit a wave always on the front side, under the crest. Gripping her fish tightly, she bends in her slow flight and paralyzes it by a single blow in the spine from her hooked beak. Then she drops it back into the whitecaps, where, jumping to the top of my rock, I can see it occasionally struggling near the surface.

Cheeeep! "try it now," she whistles.

Pip, pip! "here goes!" cries the little one who failed before; and down he drops, *souse!* going clear under in his impatient hunger, forgetting precept and example and past experience.

Again the waves race over him; but there is a satisfied note in the mother's whistle which tells me that

she sees him, and that he is doing well. In a moment he is out again with a great rush and sputter, gripping his fish and *pip-pipping* his exultation. Away he goes in low heavy flight to the nest. The mother circles over him a moment to be sure he is not overloaded; then she goes back with the other neophyte and ranges back and forth over the shoal's edge.

It is clear now to even my eyes that there is a vast difference in the characters of young fishhawks. The first was eager, headstrong, impatient; the second is calmer, stronger, more obedient. He watches the mother; he heeds her signals. Five minutes later he makes a clean, beautiful swoop and comes up with his fish. The mother whistles her praise as she drops beside him. My eyes follow them as, gossiping like two old cronies, they wing their slow way over the dancing whitecaps and climb the slanting tree-tops to the nest.

The day's lessons are over now, and I go back to my bait-catching with a new admiration for these winged members of the brotherhood. Perhaps there is also a bit of envy or regret in my meditation as I tie on a new hook to replace the one that an uneasy eel is trying to rid himself of, down in the mud. If I had only had some one to teach me like that, I should certainly now be a better fisherman.

Next day, when the mother came up the lake to the shoal with her two little ones, there was a surprise awaiting them. For half an hour I had been watching from the point to anticipate their coming. There were some things that puzzled me, and that puzzle me still, in Ismaques' fishing. If he caught his fish in his mouth, after the methods of loon and otter, I could understand it better. But to catch a fish — whose dart is like lightning — under the water with his feet, when, after his plunge, he can see neither his fish nor his feet, must require some puzzling calculation. And I had set a trap in my head to find out how it is done.

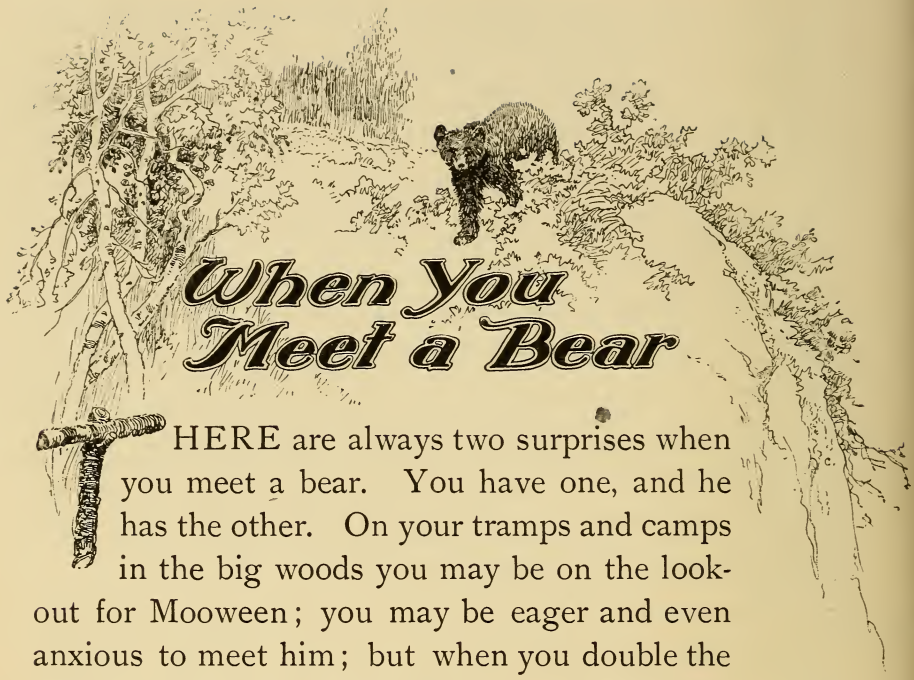
When the fishermen hove into sight, and their eager pipings came faintly up the lake ahead of them, I paddled hastily out and turned loose a half-dozen chub in the shallow water. I had kept them alive as long as possible in a big pail, and they still had life enough to fin about near the surface. When the fishermen arrived I was sitting among the rocks as usual, and turned to acknowledge the mother bird's *Ch'wee?* But my deep-laid scheme to find out their method accomplished nothing; except, perhaps, to spoil the day's lesson. They saw my bait on the instant. One of the youngsters dove headlong without poising, went under, missed his fish, rose, plunged again. He got

him that time and went away sputtering. The second took his time, came down on a long swift slant, and got his fish without going under. Almost before the lesson began it was over. The mother circled about for a few moments in a puzzled sort of way, watching the young fishermen flapping up the slope to their nest. Something was wrong. She had fished enough to know that success means something more than good luck; and this morning success had come too easily. She wheeled slowly over the shallows, noting the fish there, where they plainly did not belong, and dropping to examine with suspicion one big chub that was floating, belly up, on the water. Then she went under with a rush, where I could not see, came out again with a fish for herself, and followed her little ones to the nest.

Next day I set the trap again in the same way. But the mother, with her lesson well laid out before her, remembered yesterday's unearned success and came over to investigate, leaving her young ones circling along the farther shore. There were the fish again, in shallow water; and there — too easy altogether! — were two dead ones floating among the whitecaps. She wheeled away in a sharp turn, as if she had not seen anything, whistled her pupils up to her, and went on to other fishing grounds.

Presently, above the next point, I heard their pipings and the sharp, up-sliding *Cheeeep!* which was the mother's signal to swoop. Paddling up under the point in my canoe, I found them all wheeling and diving over a shoal, where I knew the fish were smaller and more nimble, and where there were lily pads for a haven of refuge, whither no hawk could follow them. Twenty times I saw them swoop only to miss, while the mother circled above or beside them, whistling advice and encouragement. And when at last they struck their fish and bore away towards the mountain, there was an exultation in their lusty wing beats, and in the whistling cry they sent back to me, which was not there the day before.

The mother followed them at a distance, veering in when near my shoal to take another look at the fish there. Three were floating now instead of two; the others — what were left of them — struggled feebly at the surface. *Chip, ch'weee!* she whistled disdainfully; "plenty fish here, but mighty poor fishing." Then she swooped, passed under, came out with a big chub, and was gone, leaving me only a blinding splash and a widening circle of laughing, dancing, tantalizing wavelets to tell me how she catches them.



When You Meet a Bear

THERE are always two surprises when you meet a bear. You have one, and he has the other. On your tramps and camps in the big woods you may be on the look-out for Mooween; you may be eager and even anxious to meet him; but when you double the point or push into the blueberry patch and, suddenly, there he is, blocking the path ahead, looking intently into your eyes to fathom at a glance your intentions, then, I fancy, the experience is like that of people who have the inquisitive habit of looking under their beds nightly for a burglar, and at last find him there, stowed away snugly, just where they always expected him to be.

Mooween, on his part, is always looking for you when once he has learned that you have moved into

his woods. But not from any desire to see you! He is like a lazy man looking for work, and hoping devoutly that he may not find it. A bear has very little curiosity — less than any other of the wood folk. He loves to be alone; and so, when he goes hunting for you, to find out just where you are, it is always with the creditable desire to leave you in as large a room as possible, while he himself goes quietly away into deeper solitudes. As this desire of his is much stronger than your mere idle curiosity to see something new, you rarely see Mooween even where he is most at home. And that is but another bit of the poetic justice which you stumble upon everywhere in the big woods.

It is more and more evident, I think, that Nature adapts her gifts, not simply to the necessities, but more largely to the desires, of her creatures. The force and influence of that intense desire — more intense because usually each animal has but one — we have not yet learned to measure. The owl has a silent wing, not simply because he needs it — for his need is no greater than that of the hawk, who has no silent wing — but, more probably, because of his whole-hearted desire for silence as he glides through the silent twilight. And so with the panther's foot; and so with the deer's eye, and the wolf's nose, whose

one idea of bliss is a good smell; and so with every other strongly marked gift which the wild things have won from nature, chiefly by desiring it, in the long years of their development.

This theory may possibly account for some of Mooween's peculiarities. Nature, who measures her gifts according to the desires of her creatures, remembers his love of peace and solitude, and endows him accordingly. He cares little to see you or anybody else; therefore his eyes are weak — his weakest point, in fact. He desires ardently to avoid your society and all society but his own; therefore his nose and ears are marvelously alert to discover your coming. Often, when you think yourself quite alone in the woods, Mooween is there. The wind has told your story to his nose; the clatter of your heedless feet long ago reached his keen ears, and he vanishes at your approach, leaving you to your noise and inquisitiveness and the other things you like. His gifts of concealment are so much greater than your powers of detection that he has absolutely no thought of ever seeing you. His surprise, therefore, when you do meet unexpectedly is correspondingly greater than yours.

What he will do under the unusual circumstances depends largely, not upon himself, but upon you.

With one exception, his feelings are probably the reverse of your own. If you are bold, he is timid as a rabbit; if you are panic-stricken, he knows exactly what to do; if you are fearful, he has no fear; if you are inquisitive, he is instantly shy; and, like all other wild creatures, he has an almost uncanny way of understanding your thought. It is as if, in that intent, penetrating gaze of his, he saw your soul turned inside out for his inspection. The only exception is when you meet him without fear or curiosity, with the desire simply to attend to your own affairs, as if he were a stranger and an equal. That rare mental attitude he understands perfectly — for is it not his own? — and he goes his way quietly, as if he had not seen you.

For every chance meeting Mooween seems to have a plan of action ready, which he applies without a question or an instant's hesitation. Make an unknown sound behind him as he plods along the shore, and he hurls himself headlong into the cover of the bushes, as if your voice had touched a button that released a coiled spring beneath him. Afterwards he may come back to find out what frightened him. Sit perfectly still, and he rises on his hind legs for a look and a long sniff to find out who you are. Jump at him with a yell and a flourish the instant he appears, and he will

hurl chips and dirt back at you as he digs his toes into the hillside for a better grip and scrambles away whimpering like a scared puppy.

Once in a way, as you steal through the autumn woods or hurry over the trail, you will hear sudden loud rustlings and shakings on the hardwood ridge above you, as if a small cyclone were perched there for a while, amusing itself among the leaves before blowing on. Then, if you steal up toward the sound, you will find Mooween standing on a big limb of a beech tree, grasping the narrowing trunk with his powerful forearms, tugging and pushing mightily to shake down the ripe beechnuts. The rattle and dash of the falling fruit are such music to Mooween's ears that he will not hear the rustle of your approach, nor the twig that snaps under your careless foot.

If you cry aloud now to your friends, under the hilarious impression that you have Mooween sure at last, there is another surprise awaiting you. And that suggests a bit of advice, which is most pertinent: don't stand under the bear when you cry out. If he is a little fellow, he will shoot up the tree, faster than ever a jumping jack went up his stick, and hide in a cluster of leaves, as near the top as he can get. But if he is a big bear, he will tumble down on you before you know what has happened. No slow climbing for

him; he just lets go and comes down by gravitation. As Uncle Remus says — who has some keen knowledge of animal ways under his story-telling humor — "Brer B'ar, he scramble 'bout half-way down de bee tree, en den he turn eve'ything loose en hit de groun' *kerbiff!* Look like 't wuz nuff ter jolt de life out'n 'im."

Somehow it never does jolt the life out of him, notwithstanding his great weight; nor does it interfere in any way with his speed of action, which is like lightning, the instant he touches the ground. Like the coon, who can fall from an incredible distance without hurting himself, Mooween comes down perfectly limp, falling on himself like a great cushion; but the moment he strikes, all his muscles seem to contract at once, and he bounds off like a rubber ball into the densest bit of cover at hand.

Twice have I seen him come down in this way. The first time there were two cubs, nearly full-grown, in a tree. One went up at our shout; the other came down with such startling suddenness that the man who stood ready with his rifle, to shoot the bear, jumped for his life to get out of the way; and before he had blinked the astonishment out of his eyes Mooween was gone, leaving only a violent nodding of the ground spruces to tell what had become of him.

All these plans of ready action in Mooween's head, for the rare occasions when he meets you unexpectedly, are the result of careful training by his mother. If you should ever have the good fortune to watch a mother bear and her cubs when they have no idea that you are near them, you will note two characteristic things. First, when they are traveling — and Mooween is the most restless tramp in all the woods — you will see that the cubs follow the mother closely and imitate her every action with ludicrous exactness, sniffing where she sniffs, jumping where she jumps, rising on their hind legs, with forearms hanging loosely and pointed noses thrust sharp up into the wind, on the instant that she rises, and then drawing silently away from the shore into the shelter of the friendly alders when some subtle warning tells the mother's nose that the coast ahead is not perfectly clear. So they learn to sift the sounds and smells of the wilderness, and to govern their actions accordingly. And second, when they are playing you will see that the mother watches the cubs' every action as keenly as they watched hers an hour ago. She will sit flat on her haunches, her fore paws planted between her outstretched hind legs, her great head on one side, noting every detail of their boxing and wrestling and climbing, as if she had showed them once how it ought to be

done and were watching now to see how well they remembered their lessons. And now and then one or the other of the cubs receives a sound cuffing; for which I am unable to account, except on the theory that he was doing something contrary to his plain instructions.

It is only when Mooween meets some new object, or some circumstance entirely outside of his training, that instinct and native wit are set to work; and then you see for the first time some trace of hesitation on the part of this self-confident prowler of the big woods. Once I startled him on the shore, whither he had come to get the fore quarters of a deer that had been left there. He jumped for cover at the first alarm without even turning his head, just as he had seen his mother do, a score of times, when he was a cub. Then he stopped, and for three or four seconds considered the danger in plain sight—a thing I have never seen any other bear imitate. He wavered for a moment more, doubtful whether my canoe were swifter than he and more dangerous. Then satisfied that, at least, he had a good chance, he jumped back, grabbed the deer, and dragged it away into the woods.

Another time I met him on a narrow path where he could not pass me and where he did not want to turn back, for something ahead was calling him strongly.

That short meeting furnished me the best study in bear nature and bear instinct that I have ever been allowed to make. And, at this distance, I have small desire to repeat the experience.

It was on the Little Sou'west Mirimichi, a very wild river, in the heart of the wilderness. Just above my camp, not half a mile away, was a salmon pool that, so far as I know, had never been fished. One bank of the river was an almost sheer cliff, against which the current fretted and hissed in a strong deep rush to the rapids and a great silent pool far below. There were salmon under the cliff, plenty of them, balancing themselves against the arrowy run of the current; but, so far as my flies were concerned, they might as well have been in the Yukon. One could not fish from the opposite shore — there was no room for a back cast, and the current was too deep and swift for wading — and on the shore where the salmon were there was no place to stand. If I had had a couple of good Indians, I might have dropped down to the head of the swift water and fished, while they held the canoe with poles braced on the bottom; but I had no two good Indians, and the one I did have was unwilling to take the risk. So we went hungry, almost within sight and sound of the plunge of heavy fish, fresh run from the sea.

One day, in following a porcupine to see where he was going, I found a narrow path running for a few hundred yards along the side of the cliff, just over where the salmon loved to lie, and not more than thirty feet above the swift rush of water. I went there with my rod and, without attempting to cast, dropped my fly into the current and paid out from my reel. When the line straightened I raised the rod's tip and set my fly dancing and skittering across the surface to an eddy behind a great rock. In a flash I had raised and struck a twenty-five pound fish; and in another flash he had gone straight downstream in the current, where from my precarious seat I could not control him. Down he went, leaping wildly high out of water, in a glorious rush, till all my line buzzed out of the reel, down to the very knot at the bottom, and the leader snapped as if it had been made of spider's web.

I reeled in sadly, debating with myself the unanswerable question of how I should ever have reached down thirty feet to gaff my salmon, had I played him to a standstill. Then, because human nature is weak, I put on a stronger, double leader and dropped another fly into the current. I might not get my salmon; but it was worth the price of fly and leader just to raise him from the deeps and see his terrific rush

downstream, jumping, jumping, as if the witch of Endor were astride of his tail in lieu of her broomstick.

A lively young grilse plunged headlong at the second fly and, thanks to my strong leader, I played him out in the current and led him listlessly, all the jump and fight gone out of him, to the foot of the cliff. There was no apparent way to get down; so, taking my line in hand, I began to lift him bodily up. He came easily enough till his tail cleared the water; then the wiggling, jerky strain was too much. The fly pulled out, and he vanished with a final swirl and slap of his broad tail to tell me how big he was.

Just below me a bowlder lifted its head and shoulders out of the swirling current. With the canoe line I might easily let myself down to that rock and make sure of my next fish. Getting back would be harder; but salmon are worth some trouble; so I left my rod and started back to camp for the stout rope that lay coiled in the bow of my canoe. It was late afternoon and I was hurrying along the path, giving chief heed to my feet in the ticklish walking, with the cliff above and the river below, when a loud *Hoowuff!* brought me up with a shock. There at a turn in the path, not ten yards ahead, stood a huge bear, calling unmistakable halt, and blocking me in as completely as if the mountain had toppled over before me.

There was no time to think; the shock and scare were too great. I just gasped *Hoowuff!* instinctively, as the bear had shot it out of his deep lungs a moment before, and stood stock-still, as he was doing. He was startled as well as I. That was the only thing that I was sure about.

I suppose that in each of our heads at first there was just one thought: "I 'm in a fix; how shall I get out?" And in his training or mine there was absolutely nothing to suggest an immediate answer. He was anxious, evidently, to go on. Something, a mate perhaps, must be calling him up river; else he would have whirled and vanished at the first alarm. But how far might he presume on the big animal's timidity who stood before him blocking the way? That was his question, plainly enough. Had I been a moment sooner, or he a moment later, we would have met squarely at the turn; he would have clinched with me in sudden blind ferocity, and that would have been the end of one of us. As it was he saw me coming heedlessly and, being peaceably inclined, had stopped me with his sharp *Hoowuff!* before I should get too near. There was no snarl or growl, no savageness in his expression; only intense wonder and questioning in the look which fastened upon my face and seemed to bore its way through, to find out just what I was thinking.

I met his eyes squarely with mine and held them, which was perhaps the most sensible thing I could have done; though it was all unconscious on my part. In the brief moment that followed I did a lot of thinking. There was no escape, up or down; I must go on or turn back. If I jumped forward with a yell, as I had done before under different circumstances, would he not rush at me savagely, as all wild creatures do when cornered? No, the time for that had passed with the first instant of our meeting. The bluff would now be too apparent; it must be done without hesitation, or not at all. On the other hand, if I turned back he would follow me to the end of the ledge, growing bolder as he came on; and beyond that it was dangerous walking, where he had all the advantage and all the knowledge of his ground. Besides, it was late, and I wanted a salmon for my supper.

I have wondered since how much of this hesitation he understood; and how he came to the conclusion, which he certainly reached, that I meant him no harm, but only wanted to get on and was not disposed to give him the path. All the while I looked at him steadily, until his eyes began to lose their intentness. My hand slipped back and gripped the handle of my hunting knife. Some slight confidence came with the feel of the heavy weapon; though I would certainly have gone

over the cliff and taken my chances in the current, rather than have closed with him, with all his enormous strength, in that narrow place. Suddenly his eyes wavered from mine; he swung his head to look down and up; and I knew instantly that I had won the first move — and the path also, if I could keep my nerve.

I advanced a step or two very quietly, still looking at him steadily. There was a suggestion of white teeth under his wrinkled chops; but he turned his head to look back over the way he had come, and presently he disappeared. It was only for a moment; then his nose and eyes were poked cautiously by the corner of rock. He was peeking to see if I were still there. When the nose vanished again I stole forward to the turn and found him just ahead, looking down the cliff to see if there were any other way below.

He was uneasy now; a low, whining growl came floating up the path. Then I sat down on a rock, squarely in his way, and for the first time some faint suggestion of the humor of the situation gave me a bit of consolation. I began to talk to him, not humorously, but as if he were a Scotchman and open only to argument. "You're in a fix, Mooween, a terrible fix," I kept saying softly; "but if you had only stayed at home till twilight, as a bear ought to do, we should be happy now, both of us. You have put me in a fix, too,

you see; and now you 've just got to get me out of it. I 'm not going back. I don't know the path as well as you do. Besides, it will be dark soon, and I should probably break my neck. It 's a shame, Mooween, to put any gentleman in such a fix as I am in this minute, just by your blundering carelessness. Why did n't you smell me anyway, as any but a fool bear would have done, and take some other path over the mountain? Why don't you climb that spruce now and get out of the way? "

I have noticed that all wild animals grow uneasy at the sound of the human voice, speaking however quietly. There is in it something deep, unknown, mysterious beyond all their powers of comprehension; and they go away from it quickly when they can. I have a theory also that all animals, wild and domestic, understand more of our mental attitude than we give them credit for; and the theory gains rather than loses strength whenever I think of Mooween on that narrow pass. I can see him now, turning, twisting uneasily, and the half-timid look in his eyes as they met mine furtively, as if ashamed; and again the low, troubled whine comes floating up the path and mingles with the rush and murmur of the salmon pool below.

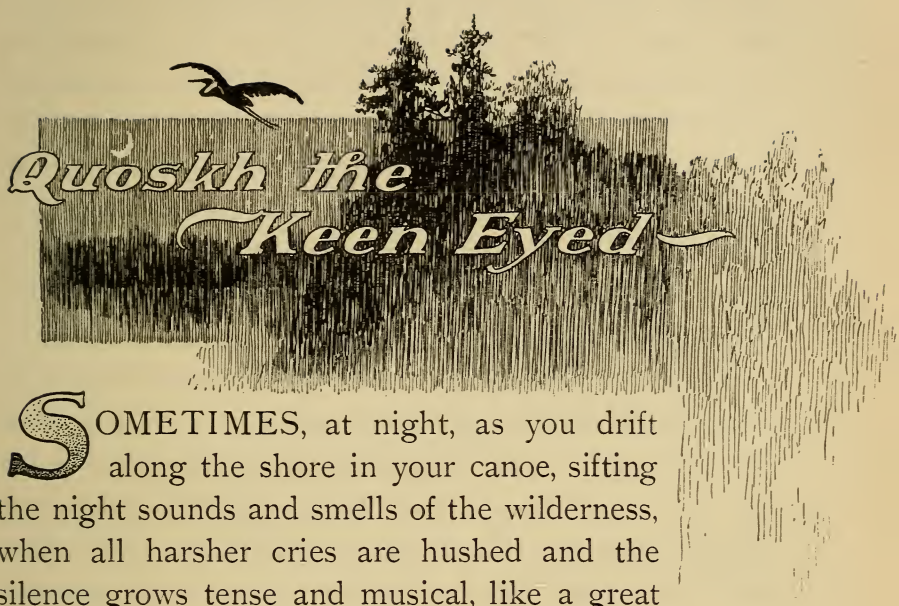
A bear hates to be outdone quite as much as a fox does. If you catch him in a trap, he seldom growls

or fights or resists, as lynx and otter and almost all other wild creatures do. He has outwitted you and shown his superiority so often that he is utterly overwhelmed and crushed when you find him, at last, helpless and outdone. He seems to forget all his great strength, all his frightful power of teeth and claws. He just lays his head down between his paws, turns his eyes aside, and refuses to look at you or to let you see how ashamed he is. That is what you are chiefly conscious of, nine times out of ten, when you find a bear or a fox held fast in your trap; and something of that was certainly in Mooween's look and actions now, as I sat there in his path enjoying his confusion.

Near him a spruce tree sprang out of the rocks and reached upward to a ledge far above. Slowly he raised himself against this, but turned to look at me again sitting quietly in his own path — that he could no longer consider his — and smiling at his discomfiture as I remember how ashamed he is to be outdone. Then an electric shock seemed to hoist him out of the trail. He shot up the tree in a succession of nervous, jerky jumps, rising with astonishing speed for so huge a creature, smashing the little branches, ripping the rough bark with his great claws, sending down a clattering shower of chips and dust behind him, till he reached the level of the ledge above and

sprang out upon it; where he stopped and looked down to see what I would do next. And there he stayed, his great head hanging over the edge of the rock, looking at me intently till I rose and went quietly down the trail.

It was morning when I came back to the salmon pool. Unlike the mossy forest floor, the hard rock bore no signs to tell me — what I was most curious to know — whether he came down the tree or found some other way over the mountain. At the point where I had stood when his deep *Hoowuff!* first startled me I left a big salmon, for a taste of which any bear will go far out of his way. Next morning it was gone; and so it may be that Mooween, on his next journey, found another and a pleasanter surprise awaiting him at the turn of the trail.



Quoskh the Keen Eyed

SOMETIMES, at night, as you drift along the shore in your canoe, sifting the night sounds and smells of the wilderness, when all harsher cries are hushed and the silence grows tense and musical, like a great stretched chord over which the wind is thrumming low suggestive melodies, a sudden rush and flapping in the grasses beside you breaks noisily into the gamut of half-heard primary tones and rising, vanishing harmonics. Then, as you listen, and before the silence has again stretched the chords of her Eolian harp tight enough for the wind's fingers, another sound, a cry, comes floating down from the air — *Quoskh? quoskh-quoskh?* a wild, questioning call, as if the startled night were asking who you are. It is only a blue heron, wakened out of his sleep on the shore

by your noisy approach, that you thought was still as the night itself. He circles over your head for a moment, seeing you perfectly, though you catch never a shadow of his broad wings; then he vanishes into the vast, dark silence, crying *Quoskh? quoskh?* as he goes. And the cry, with its strange, wild interrogation vanishing away into the outer darkness, has given him his most fascinating Indian name, Quoskh the Night's Question.

To many, indeed, even to some Indians, he has no other name and no definite presence. He rarely utters the cry by day — his voice then is a harsh croak — and you never see him as he utters it out of the solemn upper darkness; so that there is often a mystery about this voice of the night, which one never thinks of associating with the quiet, patient, long-legged fisherman that one may see any summer day along the borders of lonely lake or stream. A score of times I have been asked by old campers, "What is that?" as a sharp, questioning *Quoskh-quoskh?* seemed to tumble down into the sleeping lake. Yet they knew the great blue heron perfectly — or thought they did.

Quoskh has other names, however, which describe his attributes and doings. Sometimes, when fishing alongshore with my Indian at the paddle, the canoe would push its nose silently around a point, and I

would see the heron's heavy slanting flight already halfway up to the tree-tops, long before our coming had been suspected by the watchful little mother sheldrake, or even by the deer feeding close at hand among the lily pads. Then Simmo, who could never surprise one of the great birds however silently he paddled, would mutter something which sounded like *Quoskh K'sobeqh*, Quoskh the Keen Eyed. At other times, when we noticed him spearing frogs with his long bill, Simmo, who could not endure the sight of a frog's leg on my fry pan, would speak of him disdainfully in his own musical language as Quoskh the Frog Eater, for my especial benefit. Again, if I stopped casting suddenly at the deep trout pool opposite a grassy shore, to follow with my eyes a tall, gray-blue shadow on stilts moving dimly alongshore in seven-league-boot strides for the next bog, where frogs were plenty, Simmo would point with his paddle and say: "See, Ol' Fader Longlegs go catch-um more frogs for his babies. Funny kin' babies dat, eat-um bullfrog; don' chu tink so?"

Of all his names — and there were many more that I picked up from watching him in a summer's outing — "Old Father Longlegs" seemed always the most appropriate. There is a suggestion of hoary antiquity about this solemn wader of our lakes and streams. Indeed, of all birds he is the nearest to those ancient,

uncouth monsters which Nature made to people our earth in its uncouth infancy. Other herons and bitterns have grown smaller and more graceful, with shorter legs and necks, to suit our diminishing rivers and our changed landscape. Quoskh is also, undoubtedly, much smaller than he once was; but still his legs and neck are disproportionately long, when one thinks of the waters he wades and the nest he builds; and the tracks he leaves in the mud are startlingly like those fossilized footprints of giant birds that one finds in the rocks of the Pliocene era, deep under the earth's surface, to tell what sort of creatures lived in the vast solitudes before man came to replenish the earth and subdue it.

Closely associated with this suggestion of antiquity in Quoskh's demeanor is the opposite suggestion of perpetual youth which he carries with him. Age has no apparent effect on him whatsoever. He is as old and young as the earth itself is; he is a March day, with winter and spring in its sunset and sunrise. Who ever saw a blue heron with his jewel eye dimmed or his natural force abated? Who ever caught one sleeping, or saw him tottering weakly on his long legs, as one so often sees our common wild birds clinging feebly to a branch with their last grip? A Cape Cod sailor once told me that, far out from land, his schooner

had passed a blue heron lying dead on the sea with outstretched wings. That is the only heron that I have ever heard of who was found without all his wits about him. Possibly, if Quoskh ever dies, it may suggest a solution to the question of what becomes of him. With his last strength he may fly boldly out to explore that great ocean mystery, along the borders of which his ancestors for untold centuries lived and moved, back and forth, back and forth, on their endless, unnecessary migrations, restless, unsatisfied, wandering, as if the voice of the sea were calling them whither they dared not follow.

Just behind my tent on the big lake, one summer, a faint, woodsy little trail wandered away into the woods, with endless turnings and twistings, and without the faintest indication anywhere, till you reached the very end, whither it intended going. This little trail was always full of interesting surprises. Red squirrels peeked down at you over the edge of a limb, chattering volubly and getting into endless mischief along its borders. Moose birds flitted silently over it on their mysterious errands. Now a jumping, smashing, crackling rush through the underbrush halts you suddenly, with quick beating heart, as you climb over one of the many windfalls across your path. A white flag

followed by another little one, flashing, rising, sinking and rising again over the fallen timber, tells you that a doe and her fawn were lying behind the windfall, all unconscious of your quiet approach. Again, at a turn of the trail, something dark, gray, massive looms before you, blocking the faint path; and as you stop short and shrink behind the nearest tree, a huge head and antlers swing toward you, with widespread nostrils and keen, dilating eyes, and ears like two trumpets pointing straight at your head — a bull moose, *sh!*

For a long two minutes he stands there motionless, watching the new creature that he has never seen before; and it will be well for you to keep perfectly quiet and let him surrender the path when he is so disposed. Motion on your part may bring him nearer to investigate; and you can never know at what slight provocation the red danger light will blaze into his eyes. At last he moves away, quietly at first, turning often to look and to make trumpets of his ears at you. Then he lays his great antlers back on his shoulders, sticks his nose far up ahead of him, and with long, smooth strides lunges away over the windfalls and is gone.

So every day the little trail had some new surprise for you, — owl, or hare, or prickly porcupine rattling his quills, like a quiver of arrows, and proclaiming his

Indian name, *Unk-wunk! Unk-wunk!* as he loafed along. When you had followed far, and were sure that the loitering trail had certainly lost itself, it crept at last under a dark hemlock; and there, through an oval frame of rustling, whispering green, was the loneliest, loveliest little deer-haunted beaver pond in the world, where Quoskh lived with his mate and his little ones.

The first time I came down the trail and peeked through the oval frame of bushes, I saw him; and the very first glimpse made me jump at the thought of what a wonderful discovery I had made, namely, that little herons play with dolls, as children do. But I was mistaken. Quoskh had been catching frogs and hiding them, one by one, as I came along. He heard me before I knew he was there, and jumped for his last frog, a big fat one, with which he slanted up heavily on broad vans — with a hump on his back and a crook in his neck and his long legs trailing below and behind — towards his nest in the hemlock, beyond the beaver pond. When I saw him plainly he was just crossing the oval frame through which I looked. He had gripped the frog across the middle in his long beak, much as one would hold it with a pair of blunt shears, swelling it out at either side, like a string tied tight about a pillow. The head and short arms were forced up at one side, the limp legs dangled down on

the other, looking for all the world like a stuffed rag doll that Quoskh was carrying home for his babies to play with.

Undoubtedly they liked the frog much better; but my curious thought about them, in that brief romantic instant, gave me an interest in the little fellows which was not satisfied till I climbed to the nest, long afterwards, and saw them, and how they lived.

When I took to studying Quoskh, so as to know him more intimately, I found a fascinating subject; not simply because of his queer ways, but also because of his extreme wariness and the difficulties I met in catching him doing things. Quoskh K'sobeqh was the name that at first seemed most appropriate, till I had learned his habits and how best to get the weather of him — which happened only two or three times in the course of a whole summer.

One morning I went early to the beaver pond and sat down against a gray stump on the shore, with berry bushes growing to my shoulders all about me. "Now I shall keep still and see everything that comes," I thought, "and nothing, not even a blue jay, will see me."

That was almost true. Little birds, that had never seen a man in the woods before, came for the berries and billed them off within six feet of my face before

they noticed anything unusual. When they did see me they would turn their heads so as to look at me, first with one eye, then with the other, and shoot up at last, with a sharp *Burr!* of their tiny wings, to a branch over my head. There they would watch me keenly, for a wink or a minute, according to their curiosity, then swoop down and whirr their wings loudly in my face, so as to make me move and show what I was.

Across a little arm of the pond, a stone's throw away, a fine buck came to the water, put his muzzle into it, then began to fidget uneasily. Some vague, subtle flavor of me floated across and made him uneasy, though he knew not what I was. He kept tonguing his nostrils, as a cow does, so as to moisten them and catch the scent of me better. On my right, and nearer, a doe was feeding unconcernedly among the lily pads. A mink ran, hopping and halting, along the shore at my feet, dodging in and out among roots and rocks. Cheokhes always runs that way. He knows how glistening black his coat is, how shining a mark he makes for owl and hawk against the sandy shore; and so he never runs more than five feet without dodging out of sight; and he always prefers the roots and rocks that are blackest to travel on.

A kingfisher dropped with his musical *K'plop!* into the shoal of minnows that were rippling the water in

their play just in front of me. Farther out, a fishhawk came down heavily, *Souse!* and rose with a big chub. And none of these sharp-eyed wood folk saw me or knew that they were watched. Then a wide, wavy, blue line, like a great Cupid's bow, came gliding swiftly along the opposite bank of green, and Quoskh hove into sight for his morning's fishing.

Opposite me, just where the buck had stood, he folded his great wings; his neck crooked sharply; his long legs, which had been trailed gracefully behind him in his swift flight, swung under him like two pendulums as he landed lightly on the muddy shore. He knew his ground perfectly; knew every stream and frog-haunted bay in the pond as one knows his own village; yet no amount of familiarity with his surroundings can ever sing lullaby to Quoskh's watchfulness. The instant he landed he drew himself up straight, standing almost as tall as a man, and let his keen glance run along every shore just once. His head, with its bright yellow eye and long yellow beak glistening in the morning light, veered and swung over his long neck like a gilded weather-vane on a steeple. As the vane swung up the shore toward me I held my breath, so as to be perfectly motionless, thinking I was hidden so well that no eye could find me at that distance. As it swung past me slowly I

chuckled, thinking that Quoskh was deceived. I forgot altogether that a bird never sees straight ahead. When his bill had moved some thirty degrees off my nose, just enough so as to bring his left eye to bear, it stopped swinging instantly. — He had seen me at the first glance, and knew that I did not belong there.

For a long moment, while his keen eye seemed to look through and through me, he never moved a muscle. One could easily have passed over him, thinking him only one of the gray, wave-washed roots on the shore. Then he humped himself together, in that indescribably awkward way that all herons have at the beginning of their flight, slanted heavily up to the highest tree on the shore, and stopped for a longer period on a dead branch to look back at me. I had not moved so much as an eyelid; nevertheless he saw me too plainly to trust me. Again he humped himself, rose high over the tree-tops and bore away in strong, even, graceful flight for a lonelier lake, where there was no man to watch or bother him.

Far from disappointing me, this keenness of Quoskh only whetted my appetite to know more about him, and especially to watch him, close at hand, at his fishing. Near the head of the little bay, where frogs were plenty, I built a screen of boughs under the low thick branches of a spruce tree, and went away to watch other wood folk.

Next morning he did not come back; nor were there any fresh tracks of his on the shore. This was my first intimation that Quoskh knows well the rule of good fishermen, and does not harry a pool or a place too frequently, however good the fishing. The third morning he came back; and again the sixth evening; and then the ninth morning, alternating with great regularity as long as I kept tabs on him. At other times I would stumble upon him far afield, fishing in other lakes and streams; or see him winging homeward, high over the woods, from waters far beyond my ken; but these appearances were too irregular to count in a theory. I have no doubt, however, that he fished the near-by waters with as great regularity as he fished the beaver pond, and went wider afield only when he wanted a bit of variety, or bigger frogs, as all fishermen do; or when he had poor luck in satisfying the clamorous appetite of his growing brood.

It was on the sixth afternoon that I had the best chance of studying his queer ways of fishing. I was sitting in my little blind at the beaver pond, waiting for a deer, when Quoskh came striding along the shore. He would swing his weather-vane head till he saw a frog ahead, then stalk him slowly, deliberately, with immense caution; as if he knew as well as I how watchful the frogs are at his approach, and how quickly

they dive headlong for cover at the first glint of his stilt-like legs. Nearer and nearer he would glide, standing motionless as a gray root when he thought his game was watching him; then on again more cautiously, bending far forward and drawing his neck back to the angle of greatest speed and power for a blow. A quick start, a thrust like lightning — then you would see him shake his frog savagely, beat it upon the nearest stone or root, glide to a tuft of grass, hide his catch cunningly, and go on unincumbered for the next stalk, his weather-vane swinging, swinging in the ceaseless search for frogs, or possible enemies.

If the swirl of a fish among the sedges caught his keen eye, he would change his tactics, letting his game come to him instead of stalking it, as he did with the frogs. Whatever his position was, both feet down or one foot raised for a stride, when the fish appeared, he never changed it, knowing well that motion would only send his game hurriedly into deeper water. He would stand sometimes for a half hour on one leg, letting his head sink slowly down on his shoulders, his neck curled back, his long sharp bill pointing always straight at the quivering line which marked the playing fish, his eyes half closed till the right moment came. Then you would see his long neck shoot down, hear the splash and, later,

the whack of his catch against the nearest root, to kill it; and watch with curious feelings of sympathy as he hid it in the grass and covered it over, lest Hawahak the hawk should see, or Cheokhes the mink smell it, and rob him while he fished.

If he were near his last catch, he would stride back and hide the two together; if not, he covered it over in the nearest good place and went on. No danger of his ever forgetting, however numerous the catch! Whether he counts his frogs and fish, or simply remembers the different hiding places, I have no means of knowing.

Sometimes, when I surprised him on a muddy shore and he flew away without taking even one of his tidbits, I would follow his back track and uncover his hiding places to see what he had caught. Frogs, fish, pollywogs, mussels, a baby muskrat, — they were all there, each hidden cunningly under a bit of dried grass and mud. And once I went away and hid on the opposite shore to see if he would come back. After an hour or more he appeared, looking first at my tracks, then at all the shore with greater keenness than usual; then he went straight to three different hiding places that I had found, and two more that I had not seen, and flew away to his nest, a fringe of frogs and fish hanging at either side of his long bill as he went.

He had arranged them on the ground like the spokes of a wheel, as a fox does, heads all out on either side, and one leg or the tail of each crossed in a common pile in the middle; so that he could bite down over the crossed members and carry the greatest number of little frogs and fish with the least likelihood of dropping any in his flight.

The mussels which he found were invariably, I think, eaten as his own particular tidbits; for I never saw him attempt to carry them away, though once I found two or three where he had hidden them. Generally he could crack their shells easily by blows of his powerful beak, or by whacking them against a root; and so he had no need (and probably no knowledge) of the trick, which every gull knows, of mounting up to a height with some obstinate hardshell and dropping it on a rock to crack it.

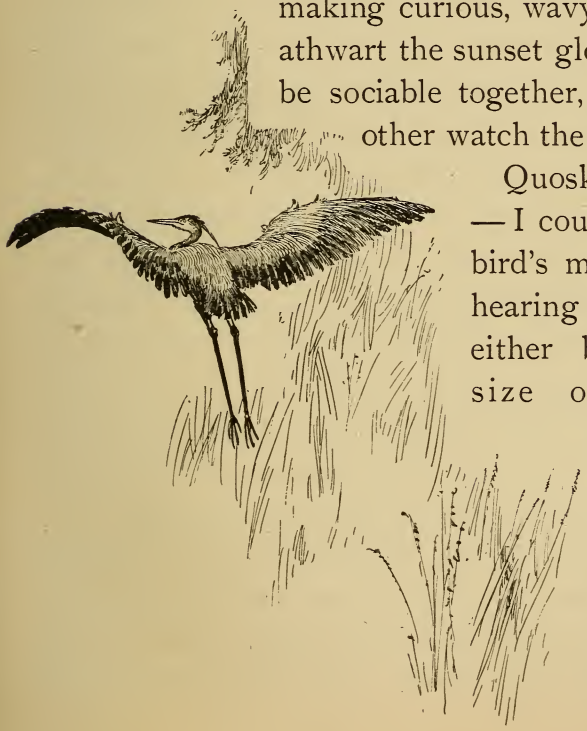
If Quoskh were fishing for his own dinner, instead of for his hungry nestlings, he adopted different tactics. For them he was a hunter, sly, silent, crafty, stalking his game by approved still-hunting methods; for himself he was the true fisherman, quiet, observant, endlessly patient. He seemed to know that for himself he could afford to take his time and be comfortable, knowing that all things, especially fish, come to him who waits long enough; while for his little ones

he must hurry, else their croakings from too long fasting would surely bring hungry, unwelcome prowlers to the big nest in the hemlock.

Once I saw him fishing in a peculiar way, which reminded me instantly of the chumming process with which every mackerel fisherman on the coast is familiar. He caught a pollywog for bait, with which he waded to a deep, cool place under a shady bank. There he whacked his pollywog into small bits and tossed them into the water, where the chum speedily brought a shoal of little fish to feed. Quoskh meanwhile stood in the shadow, where he would not be noticed, knee-deep in water, his head drawn down into his shoulders, and a friendly leafy branch bending over him to screen him from prying eyes. As a fish swam up to his chum he would spear it like lightning; throw his head back and wriggle it head-first down his long neck; then settle down to watch for the next one. And there he stayed, alternately watching and feasting, till he had enough; when he drew his head farther down into his shoulders, shut his eyes, and went fast asleep in the cool shadows,—a perfect picture of fishing indolence and satisfaction.

When I went to the nest and hid myself in the underbrush to watch, day after day, I learned more of

Quoskh's fishing and hunting. The nest was in a great evergreen, in a gloomy swamp,—a villainous place of bogs and treacherous footing, with here and there a little island of large trees. On one of these islands a small colony of herons were nesting. During the day they trailed far afield, scattering widely, each pair to its own particular fishing grounds; but when the shadows grew long, and night prowlers stirred abroad, the herons came trailing back again, making curious, wavy, graceful lines athwart the sunset glow, to croak and be sociable together, and help each other watch the long night out.



Quoskh the Watchful—I could tell my great bird's mate by sight or hearing from all others, either by her greater size or a peculiar double croak she had—had hidden her nest in the top of a great green hemlock. Near

by, in the high crotch of a dead tree, was another nest, which she had built, evidently, years before and added to each successive spring, only to abandon it at last for the evergreen. Both birds used to go to the old nest freely; and I have wondered since if it were not a bit of great shrewdness on their part to leave it there in plain sight, where any prowler might see and climb to it; while the young were securely hidden, meanwhile, in the top of the near-by hemlock, where they could see without being seen. Only at a distance could you find the nest. When under the hemlock, the mass of branches screened it perfectly, and your attention was wholly taken by the other nest, standing out in bold relief in the dead tree-top.

Such wisdom, if wisdom it were and not chance, is gained only by experience. It took at least one brood of young herons, sacrificed to the appetite of lucivee or fisher, to teach Quoskh the advantage of that decoy nest to tempt hungry prowlers upon the bare tree bole where she could have a clear field to spear them with her powerful bill and beat them down with her great wings before they should discover their mistake.

By watching the birds through my glass as they came to the young, I could generally tell what kind of game was afoot for their following. Once a long snake hung from the mother bird's bill; once it was

a bird of some kind; twice she brought small animals, whose species I could not make out in the brief moment of alighting on the nest's edge,—all these besides the regular fare of fish and frogs, of which I took no account. And then, one day while I lay in my hiding, I saw the mother heron slide swiftly down from the nest, make a sharp wheel over the lake, and plunge into the fringe of berry bushes on the shore after some animal that her keen eyes had caught moving. There was a swift rustling in the bushes, a blow of her wing to head off a runaway, two or three lightning thrusts of her javelin beak; then she rose heavily, taking a leveret with her; and I saw her pulling it to pieces awkwardly on the nest to feed her hungry little ones.

It was partly to see these little herons, the thought of which had fascinated me ever since I had seen Quoskh taking home what I thought, at first glance, was a rag doll for them to play with, and partly to find out more of Quoskh's hunting habits by seeing what he brought home, that led me at last to undertake the difficult task of climbing the huge tree to the nest. One day when the mother had brought home some unknown small animal—a mink, I thought—I came suddenly out of my hiding and crossed over to the nest. It had always fascinated me. Under it, at twilight, I had heard the mother heron croaking softly to

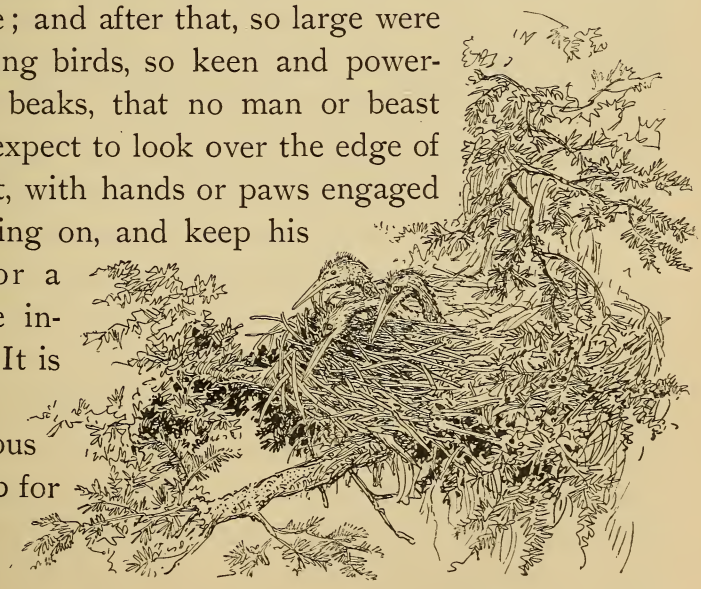
her little ones — a husky lullaby, but sweet enough to them — and then, as I paddled away, I would see the nest dark against the sunset with Mother Quoskh standing over it, a tall, graceful silhouette against the glory of twilight, keeping sentinel watch over her little ones. Now I would solve the mystery of the high nest by looking into it.

The mother, alarmed by my sudden appearance, — she had no idea that she had been watched, — shot silently away, hoping I would not notice her home through the dense screen of branches. I climbed up with difficulty; but not till I was within ten feet could I make out the mass of sticks above me. The surroundings were getting filthy and evil-smelling by this time; for Quoskh teaches the young herons to keep their nest perfectly clean by throwing all refuse over the sides of the great home. A dozen times I had watched the mother birds of the colony push their little ones to the edge of the nest to teach them this rule of cleanliness, so different from most other birds.

As I hesitated about pushing through the filth-laden branches, something bright on the edge of the nest caught my attention. It was a young heron's eye looking down at me over a long bill, watching my approach with a keenness that was but thinly disguised by the half-drawn eyelids. I had to go round the tree

at this point for a standing on a larger branch; and when I looked up, there was another eye watching down over another long bill. So, however I turned, they watched me closely getting nearer and nearer, till I reached up my hand to touch the nest. Then there was a harsh croak. Three long necks reached down suddenly over the edge of the nest on the side where I was; three long bills opened wide just over my head; and three young herons grew suddenly seasick, as if they had swallowed ipecac.

I never saw the inside of that home. At the moment I was in too much of a hurry to get down and wash in the lake; and after that, so large were the young birds, so keen and powerful the beaks, that no man or beast might expect to look over the edge of the nest, with hands or paws engaged in holding on, and keep his eyes for a single instant. It is more dangerous to climb for young herons



than for young eagles. A heron always strikes for the eye, and his blow means blindness or death, unless you watch like a cat and ward it off.

When I saw the young again they were taking their first lessons. A dismal croaking in the tree-tops attracted me, and I came over cautiously to see what my herons were doing. The young were standing up on the big nest, stretching necks and wings, and croaking hungrily; while the mother stood on a tree-top some distance away, showing them food and telling them plainly, in heron language, to come and get it. They tried it after much coaxing and croaking; but their long, awkward toes missed their hold upon the slender branch on which she was balancing delicately — just as she expected it to happen. As they fell, flapping lustily, she shot down ahead of them and led them in a long, curving slant to an open spot on the shore. There she fed them with the morsels she held in her beak; brought more food from a tuft of grass where she had hidden it, near at hand; praised them with gurgling croaks till they felt some confidence on their awkward legs; then the whole family started up the shore on their first frogging expedition.

It was intensely interesting for a man who, as a small boy, had often gone a-frogging himself — to catch big ones for a woodsy corn roast, or little ones

for pickerel bait — to sit now on a bog and watch the little herons try their luck. Mother Quoskh went ahead cautiously, searching the lily pads; the young trailed behind her awkwardly, lifting their feet like a Shanghai rooster and setting them down with a splash to scare every frog within hearing, exactly where the mother's foot had rested a moment before. So they went on, the mother's head swinging like a weather-vane to look far ahead, the little ones stretching their necks so as to peek by her on either side, full of wonder at the new world, full of hunger for things that grew there, till a startled young frog said *K'tung!* from behind a lily bud, where they did not see him, and dove headlong into the mud, leaving a long, crinkly, brown trail to tell exactly how far he had gone.

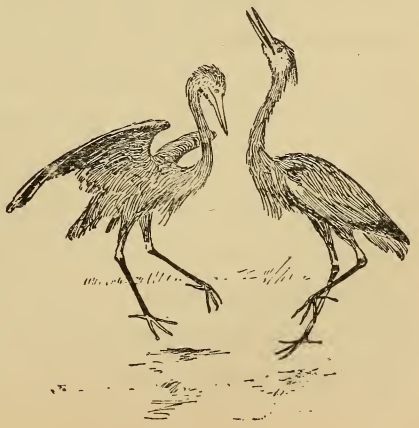
A frog is like an ostrich. When he sees nothing, because his head is hidden, he thinks nothing can see him. At the sudden alarm Mother Quoskh would stretch her neck, watching the frog's flight; then turn her head so that her long bill pointed directly at the bump on the muddy bottom, which marked the hiding place of Chigwooltz, and croak softly as a signal. At the sound one of the young herons would hurry forward eagerly; follow his mother's bill, which remained motionless, pointing all the while; twist his head till he saw the frog's back in the mud, and then lunge

at it like lightning. Generally he got his frog, and through your glass you would see the unfortunate creature wriggling and kicking his way into Quoskh's yellow beak. If the lunge missed, the mother's keen eye followed the frog's frantic rush through the mud, with a longer trail this time behind him, till he hid again; whereupon she croaked the same youngster up for another try, and then the whole family moved jerkily along, like a row of boys on stilts, to the next clump of lily pads.

As the young grew older and stronger on their legs, I noticed the rudiments, at least, of a curious habit of dancing, which seems to belong to most of our long-legged wading birds. Sometimes, sitting quietly in my canoe, I would see the young birds sail down in a long slant to the shore. Immediately on alighting, before they gave any thought to frogs or fish or carnal appetite, they would hop up and down, balancing, swaying, spreading their wings, and hopping again round about each other, as if bewitched. A few moments of this crazy performance, and then they would stalk sedately along the shore, as if ashamed of their ungainly levity; but at any moment the ecstasy might seize them and they would hop again, as if they simply could not help it. This occurred generally towards evening, when the birds had fed full

and were ready for play or for stretching their broad wings in preparation for the long autumn flight.

Watching them, one evening, I remembered suddenly a curious scene that I had stumbled upon when a boy. I had seen a great blue heron sail croaking, croaking, into an arm of the big pond where I was catching bullpouts, and crept down through dense woods to find out what he was croaking about. Instead of one, I found eight or ten of the great birds on an open shore, hopping ecstatically through some kind of a crazy dance. A twig snapped as I crept nearer, and they scattered in instant flight. It was September, and the instinct to flock and to migrate was at work among them. When they came together for the first time some dim, old remembrance of generations long gone by — the shreds of an ancient instinct, whose meaning we can only guess at — had set them to dancing wildly; though I doubted at the time whether they understood much what they were doing.



Perhaps I was wrong in this. Watching the young birds at their

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ungainly hopping, the impulse to dance seemed uncontrollable; yet they were immensely dignified about it at times; and again they appeared to get some fun out of it — as much, perhaps, as we do out of some of our peculiar dances, of which a visiting Chinaman once asked innocently: "Why don't you let your servants do it for you?"

I have seen little green herons do the same thing in the woods at mating time; and once, in the Zoölogical Gardens at Antwerp, I saw a magnificent hopping performance by some giant cranes from Africa. Our own sand-hill and whooping cranes are notorious dancers; and undoubtedly it is more or less instinctive with all the tribes of the cranes and herons, from the least to the greatest. But what the instinct means — unless, like our own dancing, it is a pure bit of pleasure-making, as crows play games and loons swim races — nobody can tell.

Before the young were fully grown, and while yet they were following the mother to learn the ways of frogging and fishing, a startling thing occurred which made me ever afterwards look up to Quoskh with honest admiration. I was still-fishing in the middle of the big lake, one late afternoon, when Quoskh and her little ones sailed over the trees from the beaver

pond and lit on a grassy shore. A shallow little brook stole into the lake there, and Mother Quoskh left her young to frog for themselves, while she went fishing up the brook under the alders. I was watching the young herons through my glass when I saw a sudden rush in the tall grass near them. All three humped themselves, heron fashion, on the instant. Two got away safely; the other had barely spread his wings when a black animal leaped out of the grass for his neck and pulled him down, flapping and croaking desperately.

I pulled up my killick on the instant and paddled over to see what was going on, and what the creature was that had leaped out of the grass. Before my paddle had swung a dozen strokes I saw the alders by the brook open swiftly, and Mother Quoskh sailed out and drove like an arrow straight at the struggling wing tips, which still flapped spasmodically above the grass. Almost before her feet had dropped to a solid landing she struck two fierce, blinding, downward blows of her great wings. Her neck curved back and shot straight out, driving the keen six-inch bill before it, quicker than ever a Roman arm drove its javelin. Above the *lap-lap* of my canoe I heard a savage cry of pain; the same black animal leaped up out of the tangled grass, snapping for the neck; and a desperate

battle began, with short gasping croaks and snarls that made caution unnecessary as I sped over to see who the robber was, and how Quoskh was faring in the good fight.

The canoe shot up behind a point where, looking over the low bank, I had the arena directly under my eye. The animal was a fisher — black-cat the trappers call him — the most savage and powerful fighter of his size in the whole world, I think. In the instant that I first saw him, quicker than thought he had hurled himself twice at the towering bird's breast. Each time he was met by a lightning blow in the face from Quoskh's stiffened wing. His teeth ground the big quills to pulp; his claws tore them into shreds; but he got no grip in the feathery mass, and he slipped, clawing and snarling, into the grass, only to spring again like a flash. Again the stiff wing blow; but this time his jump was higher; one claw gripped the shoulder, tore its way through flying feathers to the bone, while his weight dragged the big bird down. Then Quoskh shortened her neck in a great curve. Like a snake it glided over the edge of her own wing for two short, sharp down-thrusts of the deadly javelin — so quick that my eye caught only the double yellow flash of it. With a sharp screech the black-cat leaped away and whirled towards me blindly. One eye was

gone; an angry red welt showed just over the other, telling how narrowly the second thrust had missed its mark.

A shiver ran over me as I remembered how nearly I had once come myself to the black-cat's condition, and from the same keen weapon. I was a small boy at the time, following a big, good-natured hunter that I met in the woods, one day, from pure love of the wilds and for the glory of carrying the game bag. He shot a great blue heron, which fell with a broken wing into some soft mud and water grass. Carelessly he sent me to fetch it, not caring to wet his own feet. As I ran up, the heron lay resting quietly, his neck drawn back, his long keen bill pointing always straight at my face. I had never seen so big a bird before, and bent over him wondering at his long bill, admiring his intensely bright eye.

I did not know then — what I have since learned well — that you can always tell when the rush or spring or blow of any beast or bird — or of any man, for that matter — will surely come by watching the eye closely. There is a fire that blazes in the eye before the blow comes, before ever a muscle has stirred to do the brain's quick bidding. As I bent over, fascinated by the keen, bright look of the wounded bird, and reached down my hand to pick him up, there was a flash deep

in the eye, like the glint of sunshine from a mirror, and I dodged instinctively. Well for me that I did so. Something shot by my face like lightning, opening up a long red gash across my left temple from eyebrow to ear. As I jumped I heard a careless laugh. "Look out, Sonny, he may bite you — Gosh! what a close call!" And with a white, scared face, as he saw the ugly wound that the heron's beak had opened, he dragged me away as if there had been a bear in the water grass.

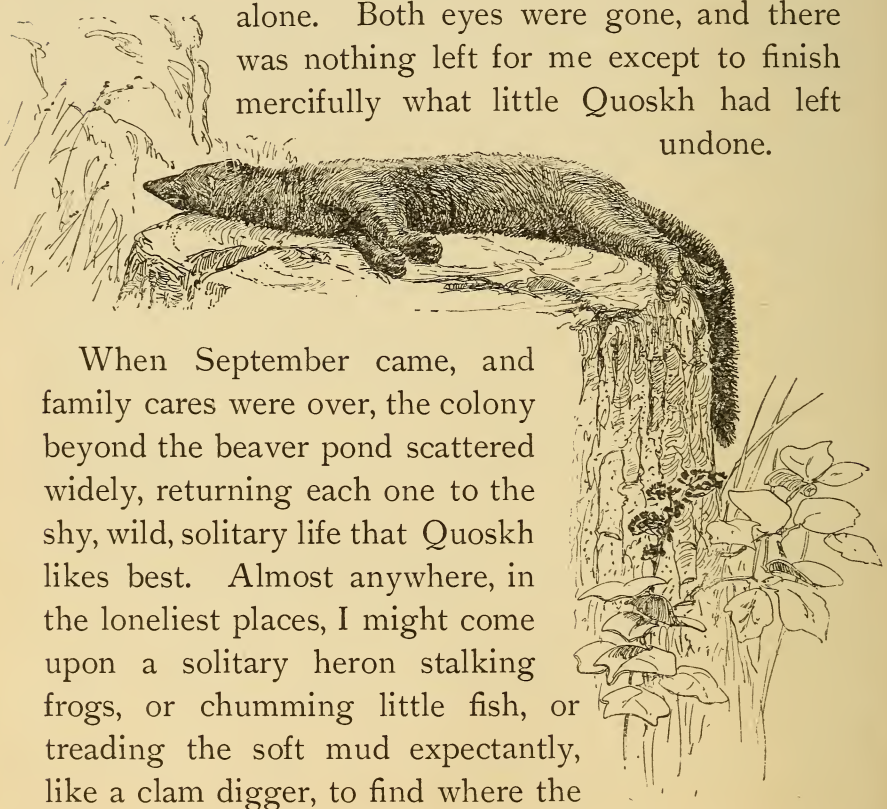
The black-cat had not yet received punishment enough. He is one of the largest of the weasel family, and has a double measure of the weasel's savageness and tenacity. He darted about the heron in a quick, nervous, jumping circle, looking for an opening behind; while Quoskh lifted her great torn wings as a shield and turned slowly on the defensive, so as always to face the danger. A dozen times the fisher jumped, filling the air with feathers; a dozen times the stiffened wings struck down to intercept his spring, and every blow was followed by a swift javelin thrust. Then, as the fisher crouched snarling in the grass, off his guard for an instant, I saw Mother Quoskh take a sudden step forward, her first offensive move — just as I had seen her twenty times at the finish of a frog stalk — and her bill shot down with the whole power

"A DOZEN TIMES THE FISHER JUMPED,
FILLING THE AIR WITH FEATHERS"

of her long neck behind it. A harsh screech of pain followed the swift blow; then the fisher wobbled away with blind, uncertain jumps towards the shelter of the woods.

And now, with her savage enemy in full flight, a fierce, hot anger seemed to flare within the mother heron, burning out all the previous cool, calculating defense. Her wings heaved aloft, as the soldiers of old threw up their shields in the moment of victory; while her whole frame seemed to swell with power, like a hero whose fight is won. She darted after the fisher, first on the run, then with heavy wing beats, till she headed him and with savage blows of pinion and beak drove him back, seeing nothing, guided only by fear and instinct, towards the water. For five minutes more she chevied him hither and yon through the trampled grass, driving him from water to bush and back again, jabbing him at every turn; till a rustle of leaves invited him, and he dashed blindly into thick underbrush, where her broad wings could not follow. Then with marvelous watchfulness she saw me standing near in my canoe; and without a thought, apparently, for the young heron lying so still in the grass close beside her, she spread her torn wings and flapped away heavily in the path of her more fortunate younglings.

I followed the fisher's trail into the woods and found him curled up in a hollow stump. He made slight resistance as I pulled him out. All his ferocity was already lulled to sleep in the vague, dreamy numbness which Nature always sends to her stricken creatures. He suffered nothing, apparently, though he was fearfully wounded; he just wanted to be let alone. Both eyes were gone, and there was nothing left for me except to finish mercifully what little Quoskh had left undone.



When September came, and family cares were over, the colony beyond the beaver pond scattered widely, returning each one to the shy, wild, solitary life that Quoskh likes best. Almost anywhere, in the loneliest places, I might come upon a solitary heron stalking frogs, or chumming little fish, or treading the soft mud expectantly, like a clam digger, to find where the

mussels were hidden by means of his long toes; or just standing still to enjoy the sleepy sunshine till the late afternoon came, when he likes best to go abroad.

They slept no more on the big nest, standing like sentinels against the twilight glow and the setting moon; but each one picked out a good spot on the shore and slept as best he could on one leg, waiting for the early fishing. It was astonishing how carefully even the young birds picked out a safe position. By day they would stand like statues in the shade of a bank or among the tall grasses, where they were almost invisible by reason of their soft colors, and wait for hours for fish and frogs to come to them. By night each one picked out a spot on the clean open shore, off a point, generally, where he could see up and down, where there was no grass to hide an enemy, and where the bushes on the bank were far enough away so that he could hear the slight rustle of leaves before the creature that made it was within springing distance. And there he would sleep safe through the long night, unless disturbed by my canoe or by some other prowler. Herons see almost as well by night as by day, and their ears are keen as a weasel's; so I could never get near enough to surprise them, however silently I paddled. I would hear only a startled

rush of wings, and then a questioning call as they sailed over me before winging away to quieter beaches.

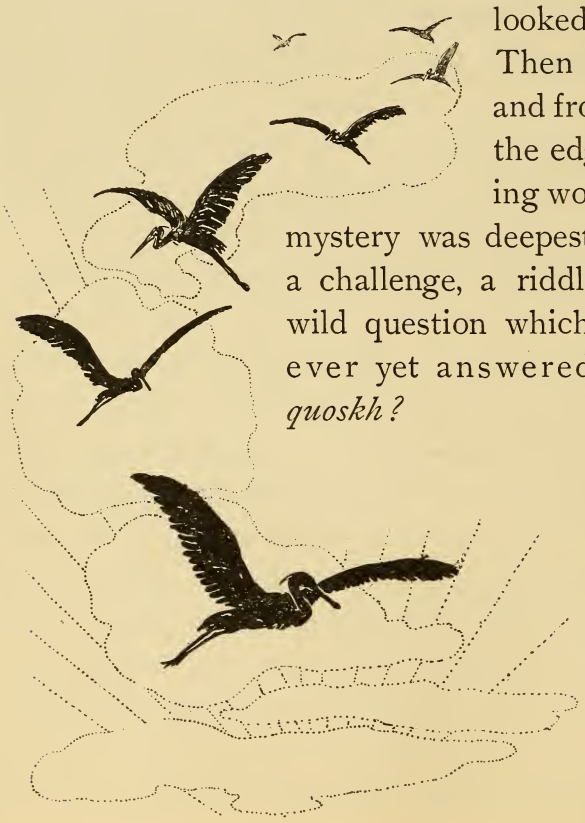
If I were jacking, with a light blazing brightly before me in my canoe, to see what night folk I might surprise on the shore, Quoskh was the only one for whom my jack had no fascination. Deer and moose, foxes and wild ducks, frogs and fish, — all seemed equally charmed by the great wonder of a light shining silently out of the vast darkness. I saw them all, at different times, and glided almost up to them before timidity drove them away from the strange bright marvel. But Quoskh was not to be watched in that way, nor to be caught by any such trick. I would see a vague form on the far edge of the light's pathway; catch the bright flash of either eye as he swung his weather-vane head; then the vague form would slide into the upper darkness. A moment's waiting; then, above me and behind, where the light did not dazzle his eyes, I would hear his night cry — with more of anger than of questioning in it — and as I turned the jack upward I would catch a single glimpse of his broad wings sailing over the lake. Nor would he ever come back, like the fox on the bank, for a second look to be quite sure what I was.

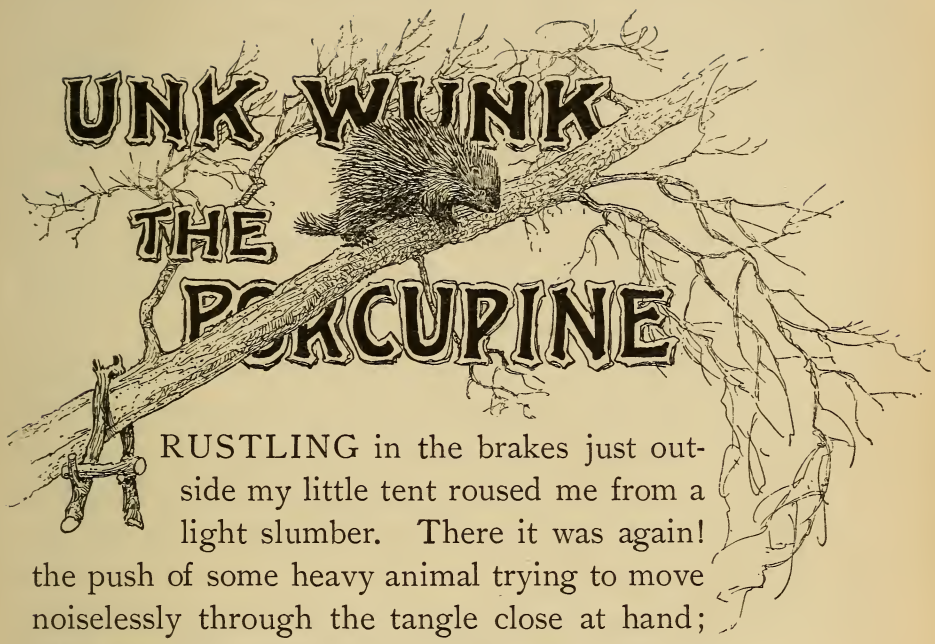
When the bright, moonlit nights came, there was uneasiness in Quoskh's wild breast. The solitary life

that he loves best claimed him by day; but at night the old gregarious instinct drew him again to his fellows. Once, when drifting over the beaver pond through the delicate witchery of the moonlight, I heard five or six of the great birds croaking excitedly at the heronry, which they had deserted weeks before. The lake, and especially the lonely little pond at the end of the trail, was lovelier than ever before; but something in the south was calling him away. I think that Quoskh was also moonstruck, as so many wild creatures are; for, instead of sleeping quietly on the shore, he spent his time circling aimlessly over the lake and woods, crying his name aloud, or calling wildly to his fellows.

At midnight of the day before I broke camp, I was out on the lake for a last paddle in the moonlight. The night was perfect, — clear, cool, intensely still. Not a ripple broke the great burnished surface of the lake; a silver pathway stretched away and away over the bow of my gliding canoe, leading me on to where the great forest stood, silent, awake, expectant, and flooded through all its dim, mysterious arches with marvelous light. The wilderness never sleeps. If it grow silent, it is to listen. To-night the woods were tense as a waiting fox, watching to see what new thing would come out of the lake, or what strange mystery would be born under their own soft shadows.

Quoskh was abroad too, bewitched by the moonlight. I heard him calling and paddled down. He knew me long before he was anything more to me than a voice of the night, and swept up to meet me. For the first time after darkness fell I saw him — just a vague, gray shadow with edges touched softly with silver light, which whirled once over my canoe and looked down into it. Then he vanished; and from far over on the edge of the waiting woods, where the mystery was deepest, came a cry, a challenge, a riddle, the night's wild question which no man has ever yet answered — *Quoskh? quoskh?*





RUSTLING in the brakes just outside my little tent roused me from a light slumber. There it was again! the push of some heavy animal trying to move noiselessly through the tangle close at hand; while from the old lumber camp in the midst of the clearing a low gnawing sound floated up through the still night. I sat up quickly to listen; but at the slight movement all was quiet again. The night prowlers had heard me and were on their guard.

One need have no fear of things that come round in the night. They are much shyer than you are, and can see you better; so that, if you blunder towards them, they mistake your blindness for courage, and take to their heels promptly. As I stepped out there

was a double rush in some bushes behind my tent, and by the light of a half-moon I caught one glimpse of a bear and her cub jumping away for the shelter of the woods.

The gnawing still went on behind the old shanty by the river. "Another cub!" I thought — for I was new to the big woods — and stole down to peek by the corner of the camp, in whose yard I had pitched my tent the first night out in the wilderness.

There was an old molasses hogshead lying just beyond the log camp, its mouth looking black as ink in the moonlight, and the scratching-gnawing sounds went on steadily within its shadow. "He 's inside," I thought with elation, "scraping off the crusted sugar. Now to catch him!"

I stole round the camp, so as to bring the closed end of the hogshead between me and the prize, crept up breathlessly, and with a quick jerk hove the old tub up on end, trapping the creature inside. There was a thump, a startled scratching and rustling, a violent rocking of the hogshead, which I tried to hold down; then all was silent in the trap. "I 've got him!" I thought, forgetting all about the old she-bear, and shouted for Simmo to wake up and bring the ax.

We drove a ring of stakes close about the hogshead, weighted it down with heavy logs, and turned in to

sleep. In the morning, with cooler judgment, we decided that a bear cub was too troublesome a pet to keep in a tent; so I stood by with a rifle while Simmo hove off the logs and cut the stakes, keeping a wary eye on me, meanwhile, to see how far he might trust his life to my nerve in case the cub should be big and troublesome; for an Indian takes no chances. A stake fell; the hogshead toppled over by a push from within; Simmo sprang away with a yell; and out wobbled a big porcupine, the biggest I ever saw, and tumbled away straight towards my tent. After him went the Indian, making sweeping cuts at the stupid thing with his ax, and grunting his derision at my bear cub.

Halfway to the tent Unk Wunk stumbled across a bit of pork rind, and stopped to nose it daintily. I caught Simmo's arm and stayed the blow that would have made an end of my catch. Then, between us, Unk Wunk sat up on his haunches, took the pork in his fore paws and sucked the salt out of it, as if he had never a concern and never an enemy in the wide world. A half hour later he loafed into my tent, where I sat repairing a favorite salmon fly that some hungry sea-trout had torn to tatters, and drove me unceremoniously out of my own bailiwick in his search for more salt.

Such a philosopher, whom no prison can dispossess of his peace of mind, and whom no danger can deprive

of his simple pleasures, deserves more consideration than the naturalists have ever given him. I resolved on the spot to study him more carefully. As if to discourage all such attempts and make himself a target for my rifle, he nearly spoiled my canoe the next night by gnawing a hole through the bark and ribs for some suggestion of salt that only his greedy nose could possibly have found.

Once I found him on the trail, some distance from camp, and, having nothing better to do, I attempted to drive him home. My intention was to share hospitality; to give him a bit of bacon, and then study him as I ate my own dinner. He turned at the first suggestion of being driven, came straight at my legs, and by a vicious slap of his tail left some of his quills in me before I could escape. Then I drove him in the opposite direction, whereupon he turned and bolted past me; and when I arrived at camp he was busily engaged in gnawing the end from Simmo's ax handle.

However you take him, Unk Wunk is one of the mysteries. He is a perpetual question scrawled across the forest floor, which nobody pretends to answer; a problem that grows only more puzzling as you study to solve it.

Of all the wild creatures he is the only one that has no intelligent fear of man, and that never learns, either

by instinct or experience, to avoid man's presence. He is everywhere in the wilderness, until he changes what he would call his mind; and then he is nowhere, and you cannot find him. He delights in solitude, and cares not for his own kind; yet now and then you will stumble upon a whole convention of porcupines at the base of some rocky hill, each one loafing around, rattling his quills, grunting his name *Unk Wunk! Unk Wunk!* and doing nothing else all day long.

You meet him to-day, and he is timid as a rabbit; to-morrow he comes boldly into your tent and drives you out, if you happen to be caught without a club handy. He never has anything definite to do, nor any place to go to; yet stop him at any moment and he will risk his life to go just a foot farther. Now try to drive or lead him another foot in the same direction, and he will bolt back, as full of contrariness as two pigs on a road, and let himself be killed rather than go where he was heading a moment before. He is perfectly harmless to every creature; yet he lies still and kills the savage fisher that attacks him, or even the big Canada lynx, that no other creature in the woods would dare to tackle.

Above all these puzzling contradictions is the prime question of how Nature ever produced such a creature, and what she intended doing with him; for he seems

to have no place nor use in the natural economy of things. Recently the Maine legislature has passed a bill forbidding the shooting of porcupines, on the curious ground that he is the only wild animal that can easily be caught and killed without a gun; so that a man lost in the woods need not starve to death but may feed on porcupine, as the Indians sometimes do. This is the only suggestion thus far, from a purely utilitarian standpoint, that Unk Wunk is no mistake, but may have his uses.

Once, to test the law and to provide for possible future contingencies, I added Unk Wunk to my bill of fare — a vile, malodorous suffix that might delight a lover of strong cheese. It is undoubtedly a good law; but I cannot now imagine any one being grateful for it, unless the stern alternative were death or porcupine.

The prowlers of the woods would eat him gladly enough, but that they are sternly forbidden. They cannot even touch him without suffering the consequences. It would seem as if Nature, when she made this block of stupidity in a world of wits, provided for him tenderly, as she would for a half-witted or idiot child. He is the only wild creature for whom starvation has no terrors. All the forest is his storehouse. Buds and tender shoots delight him in their season; and when the cold becomes bitter in its intensity, and

the snow packs deep, and all other creatures grow gaunt and savage in their hunger, Unk Wunk has only to climb the nearest tree, chisel off the rough, outer shell with his powerful teeth, and then feed full on the soft inner layer of bark, which satisfies him perfectly and leaves him as fat as an alderman.

Of hungry beasts Unk Wunk has no fear whatever. Generally they let him severely alone, knowing that to touch him would be more foolish than to mouth a sunfish or to bite a Peter-grunter. If, driven by hunger in the killing March days, they approach him savagely, he simply rolls up and lies still, protected by an armor that only a steel glove might safely explore, and that has no joint anywhere visible to the keenest eye.

Now and then some cunning lynx or weasel, wise from experience but desperate with hunger, throws himself flat on the ground, close by Unk Wunk, and works his nose cautiously under the terrible bur, searching for the neck or the underside of the body, where there are no quills. One grip of the powerful jaws, one taste of blood in the famished throat of the prowler — and that is the end of both animals. For Unk Wunk has a weapon that no prowler of the woods ever calculates upon. His broad, heavy tail is armed with hundreds of barbs, smaller but more deadly than those on his back; and he swings this weapon with the vicious

sweep of a rattlesnake. It is probably this power of driving his barbs home by a lightning blow of his tail that has given rise to the curious delusion that Unk Wunk can shoot his quills at a distance, as if he were filled with compressed air—which is, of course, a harmless absurdity that keeps people from meddling with him too closely.

Sometimes, when attacked, Unk Wunk covers his face with this weapon. More often he sticks his head under a root or into a hollow log, leaving his tail out ready for action. At the first touch of his enemy the tail snaps right and left quicker than thought, driving the hostile head and sides full of the deadly quills, from which there is no escape; for every effort, every rub and writhe of pain, only drives them deeper and deeper, till they rest in heart or brain and finish their work.

Mooween the bear is the only one of the wood folk who has learned the trick of attacking Unk Wunk without injury to himself. If, when very hungry, he finds a porcupine, he never attacks him directly,—he knows too well the deadly sting of the barbs for that,—but bothers and irritates the porcupine by flipping earth at him, until at last Unk Wunk rolls all his quills outward and lies still. Then Mooween, with immense caution, slides one paw under him and with

"BOTHERS AND IRRITATES THE PORCUPINE
BY FLIPPING EARTH AT HIM"

a quick flip hurls him against the nearest tree, and knocks the life out of him.

If he find Unk Wunk in a tree, he will sometimes climb after him and, standing as near as the upper limbs allow, will push and tug mightily to shake him off. That is usually a vain attempt; for the creature that sleeps sound and secure through a gale in the tree-tops has no concern for the ponderous shakings of a bear. In that case Mooween, if he can get near enough without risking a fall from too delicate branches, will wrench off the limb on which Unk Wunk is sleeping and throw it to the ground. That also is usually a vain proceeding; for before Mooween can scramble down after his game, Unk Wunk is already up another tree and sleeping, as if nothing had happened, on another branch.

Other prowlers, with less strength and cunning than Mooween, fare badly when driven by famine to attack this useless creature of the woods, for whom Nature nevertheless cares so tenderly. Trappers have told me that in the late winter, when hunger is sharpest, they sometimes catch a wild-cat or lynx or fisher in their traps with his mouth and sides full of porcupine quills, showing to what straits he had been driven for food. These rare trapped animals are but an indication of many a silent struggle that only the

trees and stars are witnesses of; and the trapper's deadfall, with its quick, sure blow, is only a merciful ending to what else had been a long, slow, painful trail, ending at last under a hemlock tip with the snow for a covering.

Last summer, in a little glade in the wilderness, I found two skeletons, one of a porcupine, the other of a large lynx, lying side by side. In the latter three quills lay where the throat had once been; the shaft of another stood firmly out of an empty eye orbit; a dozen more lay about in such a way that one could not tell by what path they had entered the body. It needed no great help of imagination to read the story here of a starving lynx, too famished to remember caution, and of a dinner that cost a life.

Once also I saw a curious bit of animal education in connection with Unk Wunk. Two young owls had begun hunting, under direction of the mother bird, along the foot of a ridge in the early twilight. From my canoe I saw one of the young birds swoop downward at something in the bushes on the shore. An instant later the big mother owl followed with a sharp, angry *hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo !* of warning. The youngster dropped into the bushes; but the mother fairly knocked him away from his game in her fierce rush, and led him away silently into the woods. I went

over on the instant, and found a young porcupine in the bushes where the owl had swooped, while two more were eating lily stems farther along the shore.

Evidently Kookooskoos, who swoops by instinct at everything that moves, must be taught by wiser heads the wisdom of letting certain things severely alone.

That he needs this lesson was clearly shown by an owl that my friend once shot at twilight. There was a porcupine quill imbedded for nearly its entire length in his leg. Two more were slowly working their way into his body; and the shaft of another projected from the corner of his mouth like a toothpick. Whether he were a young owl and untaught, or whether, driven by hunger, he had thrown counsel to the winds and swooped at Unk Wunk, will never be known. That he should attack so large an animal as the porcupine would seem to indicate that, like the lynx, hunger had probably driven him beyond all consideration for his mother's teaching.

Unk Wunk, on his part, knows so very little that it may fairly be doubted whether he ever had the discipline of the school of the woods. Whether he rolls himself into a chestnut bur by instinct, as the possum plays dead, or whether that is a matter of slow learning is yet to be discovered. Whether his dense stupidity, which disarms his enemies and brings him safe out of

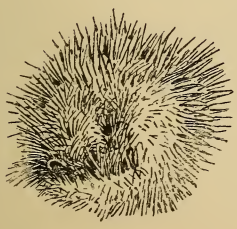
a hundred dangers where wits would fail, is, like the possum's blank idiocy, only a mask for the deepest wisdom; or whether he is quite as stupid as he acts and looks, is also a question.

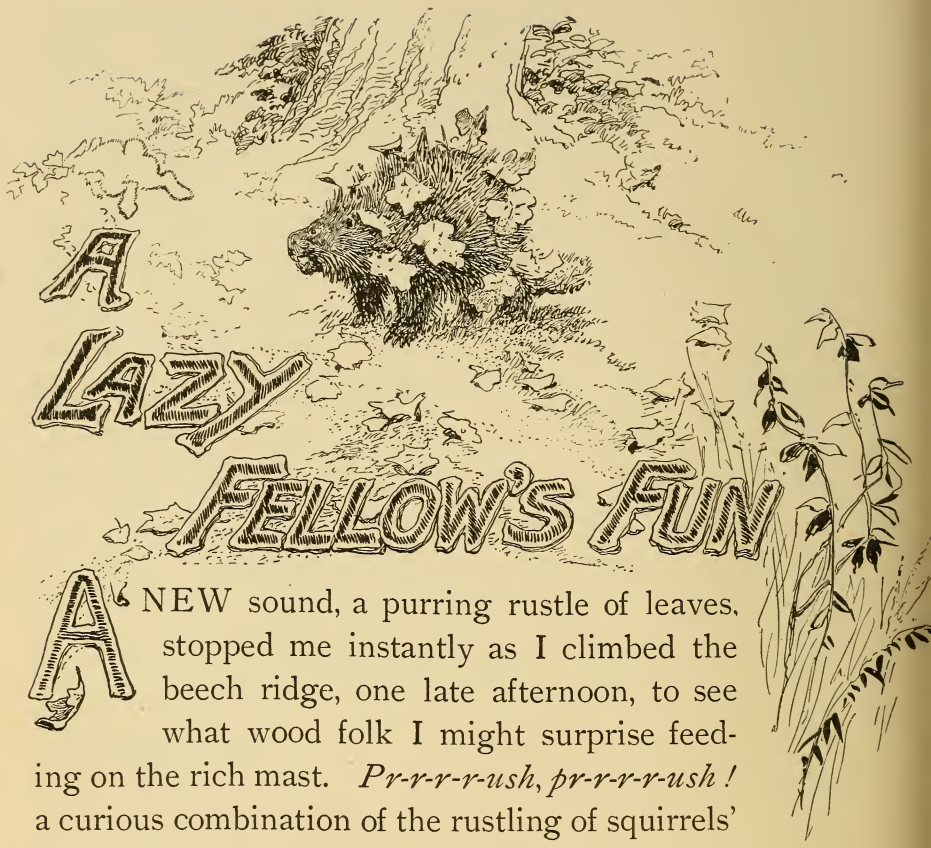
More and more I incline to the former possibility. He has learned unconsciously the strength of lying still. A thousand generations of fat and healthy porcupines have taught him the folly of trouble and rush and worry in a world that somebody else has planned, and for which somebody else is plainly responsible. So he makes no effort and lives in profound peace. But this also leaves you with a question which may take you overseas to explore Hindu philosophy. Indeed, if you have one question when you meet Unk Wunk for the first time, you will have twenty after you have studied him for a season or two. His paragraph in the woods' journal begins and ends with a question mark, and a dash for what is left unsaid.

The only indication of deliberate plan and effort that I have ever noted in Unk Wunk was in regard to teaching two young ones the simple art of swimming, — which porcupines, by the way, rarely use, and for which there seems to be no necessity. I was drifting along the shore in my canoe when I noticed a mother porcupine and two little ones, a prickly pair indeed, on a log that reached out into the lake. She had

brought them there to make her task of weaning them more easy by giving them a taste of lily buds. When they had gathered and eaten all the buds and stems that they could reach, she deliberately pushed both little ones into the water. When they attempted to scramble back she pushed them off again, and dropped in beside them and led them to a log farther down the shore, where there were more lily pads.

The numerous hollow quills floated them high in the water, like so many corks, and they paddled off with less effort than any other young animals that I have ever seen in the water. But whether this were a swimming lesson, or a rude direction to shift and browse for themselves, is still a question. With the exception of one solitary old genius, who had an astonishing way of amusing himself and scaring all the other wood folk, this was the only plain bit of forethought and sweet reasonableness that I have ever found in a porcupine.





A NEW sound, a purring rustle of leaves, stopped me instantly as I climbed the beech ridge, one late afternoon, to see what wood folk I might surprise feeding on the rich mast. *Pr-r-r-r-ush, pr-r-r-r-ush!* a curious combination of the rustling of squirrels' feet and the soft, crackling purr of an eagle's wings, growing nearer, clearer every instant. I slipped quietly behind the nearest tree to watch and listen.

Something was coming down the hill; but what? It was not an animal running. No animal that I knew, unless he had gone suddenly crazy, would ever

make such a racket to tell everybody where he was. It was not squirrels playing, nor grouse scratching among the new-fallen leaves. Their alternate rustlings and silences are unmistakable. It was not a bear shaking down the ripe beechnuts — not heavy enough for that, yet too heavy for the feet of any prowler of the woods to make on his stealthy hunting. *Pr-r-r-r-ush, swish! thump!* Something struck the stem of a bush heavily and brought down a rustling shower of leaves; then out from under the low branches rolled something that I had never seen before, — a heavy, grayish ball, as big as a half-bushel basket, so covered over with leaves that one could not tell what was inside. It was as if some one had covered a big kettle with glue and sent it rolling down the hill, picking up dead leaves as it went. So the queer thing tumbled past my feet, purring, crackling, growing bigger and more ragged every moment as it gathered up more leaves, till it reached the bottom of a sharp pitch and lay still.

I stole after it cautiously. Suddenly it moved, unrolled itself. Then out of the ragged mass came a big porcupine. He shook himself, stretched, wobbled around a moment, as if his long roll had made him dizzy; then he meandered aimlessly along the foot of the ridge, his quills stuck full of dead leaves, looking

big and strange enough to frighten anything that might meet him in the woods.

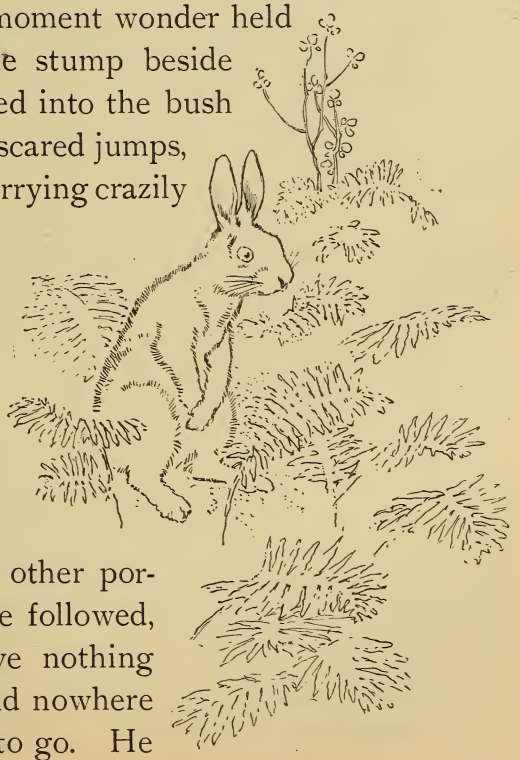
Here was a new trick, a new problem concerning one of the stupidest of all the wood folk. When you meet a porcupine and bother him, he usually rolls himself into a huge pincushion with all its points outward, covers his face with his thorny tail, and lies still, knowing well that you cannot touch him anywhere without getting the worst of it. Now had he been bothered by some animal and rolled himself up where it was so steep that he lost his balance, and so tumbled unwillingly down the long hill; or, with his stomach full of sweet beechnuts, had he rolled down lazily to avoid the trouble of walking; or is Unk Wunk brighter than he looks to discover the joy of roller coasting and the fun of feeling dizzy afterwards?

There was nothing on the hill above, no rustle or suggestion of any hunting animal to answer the question; so I followed Unk Wunk on his aimless wanderings along the foot of the ridge.

A slight movement far ahead caught my eye, and I saw a hare gliding and dodging among the brown ferns. He came slowly in our direction, hopping and halting and wiggling his nose at every bush, till he heard our approach and rose on his hind legs to listen. He gave a great jump as Unk Wunk hove into sight,

covered all over with the dead leaves that his barbed quills had picked up on his way downhill, and lay quiet where he thought the ferns would hide him.

The procession drew nearer. Moktaques, full of curiosity, lifted his head cautiously out of the ferns and sat up straight on his haunches again, his paws crossed, his eyes shining in fear and curiosity at the strange animal rustling along and taking the leaves with him. For a moment wonder held him as still as the stump beside him; then he bolted into the bush in a series of high, scared jumps, and I heard him scurrying crazily in a half circle around us.



Unk Wunk gave no heed to the interruption, but yew-yawed hither and yon after his stupid nose. Like every other porcupine that I have followed, he seemed to have nothing whatever to do, and nowhere in the wide world to go. He

loafed along lazily, too full to eat any of the beechnuts that he nosed daintily out of the leaves. He tried a bit of bark here and there, only to spit it out again. Once he started up the hill; but it was too steep for a lazy fellow with a full stomach. Again he tried it; but it was not steep enough to roll down afterwards. Suddenly he turned and came back to see who it was that followed him about.

I kept very quiet, and he brushed two or three times past my legs, eyeing me sleepily. Then he took to nosing a beechnut from under my foot, as if I were no more interesting than Alexander was to Diogenes.

I had never made friends with a porcupine, — he is too briery a fellow for intimacies, — but now with a small stick I began to search him gently, wondering if, under all that armor of spears and brambles, I might not find a place where it would please him to be scratched. At the first touch he rolled himself together, all his spears sticking straight out on every side, like a huge chestnut bur. One could not touch him anywhere without being pierced by a dozen barbs. Gradually, however, as the stick touched him gently and searched out the itching spots under his armor, he unrolled himself and put his nose under my foot again. He did not want the beechnut; but he did want

to nose it out. Unk Wunk is like a pig. He has very few things to do besides eating; but when he does start to go anywhere or do anything he always does it. Then I bent down to touch him with my hand.

That was a mistake. He felt the difference in the touch instantly. Also he smelled the salt in my hand, for a taste of which Unk Wunk will put aside all his laziness and walk a mile, if need be. He tried to grasp the hand, first with his paws, then with his mouth; but I had too much fear of his great cutting teeth to let him succeed. Instead I touched him behind the ears, feeling my way gingerly through the thick tangle of spines, testing them cautiously to see how easily they would pull out.

The quills were very loosely set in, and every arrow-headed barb was as sharp as a needle. Anything that pressed against them roughly would surely be pierced; the spines would pull out of the skin, and work their way rapidly into the unfortunate hand or paw or nose that touched them. Each spine was like a South Sea Islander's sword, set for half its length with shark's teeth. Once in the flesh it would work its own way, unless pulled out with a firm hand spite of pain and terrible laceration. No wonder Unk Wunk has no fear or anxiety when he rolls himself into a ball, protected at every point by such terrible weapons.

The hand moved very cautiously as it went down his side, within reach of Unk Wunk's one swift weapon. There were thousands of the spines, rough as a saw's edge, crossing each other in every direction, yet with every point outward. Unk Wunk was irritated, probably, because he could not have the salt he wanted. As the hand came within range, his tail snapped back like lightning. I was watching for the blow, but was not half quick enough. At the rustling snap, like the voice of a steel trap, I jerked my hand away. Two of his tail spines came with it; and a dozen more were in my coat sleeve. I jumped away as he turned, and so escaped the quick double swing of his tail at my legs. Then he rolled into a chestnut bur again, and proclaimed mockingly at every point: "Touch me if you dare!"

I pulled the two quills with sharp jerks out of my hand, pushed all the others through my coat sleeve, and turned to Unk Wunk again, sucking my wounded hand, which pained me intensely. "All your own fault," I kept telling myself, to keep from whacking him across the nose, his one vulnerable point, with my stick.

Unk Wunk, on his part, seemed to have forgotten the incident. He unrolled himself slowly and loafed along the foot of the ridge, his quills spreading and

rustling as he went, as if there were not such a thing as an enemy or an inquisitive man in all the woods.

He had an idea in his head by this time and was looking for something. As I followed close behind him, he would raise himself against a small tree, survey it solemnly for a moment or two, and go on unsatisfied. A breeze had come down from the mountain and was swaying all the tree-tops above him. He would look up steadily at the tossing branches, and then hurry on to survey the next little tree he met, with paws raised against the trunk and dull eyes following the motion overhead.

At last he found what he wanted, — two tall saplings growing close together and rubbing each other as the wind swayed them. He climbed one of these clumsily, higher and higher, till the slender top bent with his weight towards the other. Then he reached out to grasp the second top with his fore paws, hooked his hind claws firmly into the first, and lay there binding the tree-tops together, while the wind rose and began to rock him in his strange cradle.

Wider and wilder he swung, now stretched out thin, like a rubber string, his quills lying hard and flat against his sides as the tree-tops separated in the wind; now jammed up against himself as they came together again, pressing him into a flat ring with

spines sticking straight out, like a chestnut bur that has been stepped upon. And there he swayed for a full hour, till it grew too dark to see him, stretching, contracting, stretching, contracting, as if he were an accordion and the wind were playing him. His only note, meanwhile, was an occasional squealing grunt of satisfaction after some particularly good stretch, or when the motion changed and both trees rocked together in a wide, wild, exhilarating swing. Now and then the note was answered, farther down the ridge, by another porcupine going to sleep in his lofty cradle. A storm was coming; and Unk Wunk, who is one of the wood's best barometers to foretell the changing weather, was crying it aloud where all might hear.

So my question was answered unexpectedly. Unk Wunk was out for fun that afternoon, and had rolled down the hill for the joy of the swift motion and the dizzy feeling afterwards, as other wood folk do. I have watched young foxes, whose den was on a steep hillside, rolling down one after the other, and sometimes varying the programme by having one cub roll as fast as he could, while another capered alongside, snapping and worrying him in his brain-muddling tumble.

That is all very well for foxes. One expects to find such an idea in wise little heads. But who taught

Unk Wunk to roll downhill and stick his spines full of dry leaves to scare the wood folk? And when did he learn to use the tree-tops for his swing and the wind for his motive power?

Perhaps — since most of what the wood folk know is a matter of learning, not of instinct — his mother teaches him some things that we have never yet seen. If so, Unk Wunk has more in his sleepy, stupid head than we have given him credit for, and there is a very interesting lesson awaiting him who shall first find and enter the porcupine school.

THE PARTRIDGES' ROLL CALL

I WAS fishing, one September afternoon, in the pool at the foot of the lake, trying in twenty ways, as the dark evergreen shadows lengthened across the water, to beguile some wary old trout into taking my flies. They lived there, a score of them, in a dark well among the lily pads, where a cold spring bubbled up from the bottom; and their moods and humors were a perpetual source of worry or amusement, according to the humor of the fisherman himself.

For days at a time they would lie in the deep shade of the lily pads in stupid or sullen indifference. Then nothing tempted them. Flies, worms, crickets, red-fins, bumblebees, — all at the end of dainty hair leaders, were drawn with crinkling wavelets over their heads, or dropped gently beside them; but they only swirled sullenly aside, grouty as King Ahab when he turned his face to the wall and would eat no bread.

At such times scores of little fish swarmed out of the pads and ran riot in the pool. Chub, shiners,

"punkin-seeds," perch, boiled up at your flies, or chased each other in savage warfare through the forbidden water, which seemed to intoxicate them by its cool freshness. You had only to swing your canoe up near the shadowy edge of the pool and draw your cast once across the open water to know whether or not you would eat trout for breakfast. If the small fish chased your flies, then you might as well go home or study nature; you would certainly get no trout. But you could never tell when the change would come. With the smallest occasion sometimes — a coolness in the air, the run of a cat's-paw breeze, a cloud shadow drifting over — a transformation would sweep over the speckled Ahabs lying deep under the lily pads. Some blind, unknown warning would run through the pool before ever a trout had changed his position. Looking over the side of your canoe you would see the little fish darting helter-skelter away among the pads, seeking safety in shallow water, leaving the pool to its tyrant masters. Now is the time to begin casting; your trout are ready to rise.

A playful mood would often follow the testy humor. The plunge of a three-pound fish, the slap-dash of a dozen smaller ones would startle you into nervous casting. But again you might as well spare your efforts, which only served to acquaint the trout with

the best frauds in your fly book. They would rush at Hackle or Coachman or Silver Doctor, swirl under it, jump over it, but never take it in. They played with floating leaves; their wonderful eyes caught the shadow of a passing mosquito across the silver mirror of their roof, and their broad tails flung them up to intercept it; but they wanted nothing more than play or exercise, and they would not touch your flies.

Once in a way there would come a day when your study and patience found their rich reward. The slish of a line, the flutter of a fly dropping softly on the farther edge of the pool — and then the shriek of your reel, buzzing up the quiet hillside, was answered by a loud snort, as the deer that lived there bounded away in alarm, calling her two fawns to follow. But you scarcely noticed; your head and hands were too full, trying to keep the big trout away from the lily pads, where you would certainly lose him with your light tackle.

On the afternoon of which I write the trout were neither playful nor sullen. No more were they hungry. The first cast of my midget flies across the pool brought no answer. That was good; the little fish had been ordered out, evidently. Larger flies followed; but the big trout neither played with them nor let them alone. They followed cautiously, a foot

astern, to the near edge of the lily pads, till they saw me and swirled down again to their cool haunts. They were suspicious clearly; and with the lower orders, as with men, the best rule in such a case is to act naturally, with more quietness than usual, and give them time to get over their suspicion.

As I waited, my flies resting among the pads near the canoe, curious sounds came floating down the hillside — *Prut, prut, pr-r-r-rt! Whit-kwit? whit-kwit? Pr-r-rt, pr-r-rt! Ooo-it, ooo-it? Pr-r-reeee!* this last with a swift burr of wings. And the curious sounds, half questioning, half muffled in extreme caution, gave a fleeting impression of gliding in and out among the tangled underbrush. "A flock of partridges — ruffed grouse," I thought, and turned to listen more intently.

The shadows had grown long, with a suggestion of coming night; and other ears than mine had heard the sounds with interest. A swifter shadow fell on the water, and I looked up quickly to see a big owl sail silently out from the opposite hill and perch on a blasted stub overlooking the pool. Kookooskoos had been sleeping in a dark spruce when the sounds waked him, and he started out instantly, not to hunt — it was still too bright — but to locate his game and follow silently to the roosting place, near which he would hide and wait till the twilight fell darkly. I could see

it all in his attitude as he poised forward, swinging his round head to and fro, like a dog on an air trail, locating the flock accurately before he should take another flight.

Up on the hillside the eager sounds had stopped for a moment, as if some strange sixth sense had warned the birds to be silent. The owl was puzzled; but I dared not move, because he was looking straight over me. Some faint sound, too faint for my ears, made him turn his head, and on the instant I reached for the tiny rifle lying before me in the canoe. Just as he spread his wings to investigate the new sound, the little rifle spoke, and he tumbled heavily to the shore.

"One robber the less," I was thinking, when the canoe swung slightly on the water. There was a heavy plunge, a vicious rush of my unheeded line, and I seized my rod to find myself fast to a big trout, which had been watching my flies from his hiding among the lily pads till his suspicions were quieted, and the first slight movement brought him up with a rush.

Ten minutes later he lay in my canoe, where I could see him plainly to my heart's content. I was waiting for the pool to grow quiet again, when a new sound came from the underbrush, a rapid *plop*, *lop*, *lop*, *lop*, *lop*, like the sound in a sunken bottle as water pours in and the air rushes out.

There was a brook near the sounds, a lazy little stream that had lost itself among the alders and forgotten all its music; and my first thought was that some animal was standing in the water to drink, and waking the voice of the brook as the current rippled past his legs. The canoe glided over to find out what he was, when, in the midst of the sounds, came the unmistakable *Whit-kwit?* of partridges — and there they were, just vanishing glimpses of alert forms and keen eyes gliding among the tangled alder stems. When near the brook they had changed the soft, gossipy chatter, by which a flock holds itself together in the wild tangle of the burned lands, into a curious liquid sound, so like the gurgling of water by a mossy stone that it would have deceived me completely, had I not seen the birds. It was as if they tried to remind the little alder brook of the music it had lost far back among the hills.

Now I had been straitly charged, on leaving camp, to bring back three partridges for our Sunday dinner. My own little flock had grown a bit tired of trout and canned foods; and a taste of young broiled grouse, which I had recently given them, had left them hungry for more. So I left the pool and my fishing rod, just as the trout began to rise, to glide into the alders with my pocket rifle.

There were at least a dozen birds there, full-grown and strong of wing, that had not yet decided to scatter to the four winds, as had most of the coveys which one might meet on the burned lands. All summer long, while berries are plenty, the flocks hold together, finding ten pairs of quiet eyes much better protection against surprises than one frightened pair. Each flock is then under the absolute authority of the mother bird; and one who follows them gets some curious and intensely interesting glimpses of a partridge's education. If the mother bird is killed, by owl or hawk or weasel, the flock still holds together, while berries last, under the leadership of one of their own number, more bold or cunning than the others. But with the ripening autumn, when the birds have learned, or think they have learned, all the sights and sounds and dangers of the wilderness, the covey scatters; partly to cover a wider range in feeding as food grows scarcer; partly in natural revolt at maternal authority, which no bird or animal likes to endure after he has once learned to take care of himself.

I followed the flock rapidly, though cautiously, through an interminable tangle of alders that bordered the little stream, and learned some things about them; though they gave me no chance whatever for a rifle shot. The mother was gone; their leader was a

foxy bird, the smallest of the lot, who kept them moving in dense cover, running, crouching, hiding, inquisitive about me and watching me, yet keeping themselves beyond reach of harm. All the while the leader talked to them, a curious language of cheepings and whistlings; and they answered back with questions or sharp exclamations as my head appeared in sight for a moment. Where the cover was densest they waited till I was almost upon them before they whisked out of sight; and where there was a bit of opening they whirred up noisily on strong wings, or sailed swiftly away from a fallen log with the noiseless flight that a grouse knows so well how to use when the occasion comes.

Already the instinct to scatter was at work among them. During the day they had probably been feeding separately along the great hillside; but with lengthening shadows they came together again to face the wilderness night in the peace and security of the old companionship. And I had fortunately been quiet enough at my fishing to hear when the leader began to call them together and they had answered, here and there, from their feeding.

I gave up following them after a while — they were too quick for me in the alder tangle — and came out of the swamp to the ridge. There I ran along a deer

path and circled down ahead of them to a thicket of cedar, where I thought they might pass the night.

Presently I heard them coming — *Whit-kwit? pr-r-r, pr-r-r, prut, prut!* — and saw five or six of them running rapidly. The little leader saw me at the same instant and dodged back out of sight. Most of his flock followed him; but one bird, more inquisitive than the rest, jumped to a fallen log, drew himself up straight as a string, and eyed me steadily. The little rifle spoke at his head promptly; and I stowed him away comfortably, a fine plump bird, in a big pocket of my hunting shirt.

At the report another partridge, questioning the unknown sound, flew to a thick spruce, pressed close against the trunk to hide himself, and stood listening intently. Whether he was waiting to hear the sound again, or was frightened and listening for the call of the leader, I could not tell. I fired at his head quickly, and saw him sail down against the hillside, with a loud thump and a flutter of feathers behind him to tell me that he was hard hit.

I followed him up the hill, hearing an occasional flutter of wings to guide my feet, till the sounds vanished into a great tangle of underbrush and fallen trees. I searched here ten minutes or more in vain, then listened in the vast silence for a longer period; but the

bird had hidden himself away in some hole or covert where an owl might pass by without finding him. Reluctantly I turned away toward the swamp.

Close beside me was a fallen log; on my right was another; and the two had fallen so as to make the sides of a great angle, their tops resting together against the hill. Between the two were several huge trees growing among the rocks and underbrush. I climbed upon one of these fallen trees and moved along it cautiously, some eight or ten feet above the ground, looking down searchingly for a stray brown feather to guide me to my lost partridge.

Suddenly the log under my feet began to rock gently. I stopped in astonishment, looking for the cause of the strange teetering; but there was nothing on the log beside myself. After a moment I went on again, looking again for my partridge. Again the log rocked, heavily this time, almost throwing me off. Then I noticed that the tip of the other log, which lay balanced across a great rock, was under the tip of my log and was being pried up by something on the other end. Some animal was there, and it flashed upon me suddenly that he was heavy enough to lift my weight with his stout lever. I stole along so as to look behind a great tree — and there on the other log, not twenty feet away, a big bear was standing, twisting himself uneasily,

trying to decide whether to go on or go back on his unstable footing.

He discovered me at the instant that my face appeared behind the tree. Such surprise, such wonder I have seldom seen in an animal's face. For a long moment he met my eyes steadily with his. Then he began to twist again, while the logs rocked up and down. Again he looked at the strange animal on the other log; but the face behind the tree had not moved nor changed; the eyes looked steadily into his. With a startled movement he plunged off into the underbrush, and but for a swift grip on a branch the sudden lurch would have sent me off backward among the rocks. As he jumped I heard a swift flutter of wings. I followed it timidly, not knowing where the bear was, and in a moment I had the second partridge stowed away comfortably with his brother in my hunting shirt.

The rest of the flock had scattered widely by this time. I found one or two and followed them; but they dodged away into the thick alders, where I could not find their heads quick enough with my rifle sight. After a vain, hasty shot or two I went back to my fishing.

Woods and lake were soon quiet again. The trout had stopped rising, in one of their sudden moods. A vast silence brooded over the place, unbroken by any buzz of my noisy reel, and the twilight shadows were

"THEY WOULD TURN THEIR HEADS
AND LISTEN INTENTLY"

growing deeper and longer, when the soft, gliding, questioning chatter of partridges came floating out of the alders. The leader was there, in the thickest tangle — I had learned in an hour to recognize his peculiar *Prut, prut* — and from the hillside and the alder swamp and the big evergreens his scattered flock were answering; here a *kwit*, and there a *prut*, and beyond a swift burr of wings, all drawing closer and closer together.

I had still a third partridge to get for my own hungry flock; so I stole swiftly back into the alder swamp. There I found a little game path and crept along it on hands and knees, drawing cautiously near to the leader's continued calling.

In the midst of a thicket of low black alders, surrounded by a perfect hedge of bushes, I found him at last. He was on the lower end of a fallen log, gliding rapidly up and down, spreading wings and tail and budding ruff, as if he were drumming, and sending out his peculiar call at every pause. Above him, in a long line on the same log, five other partridges were sitting perfectly quiet, save now and then, when an answer came to the leader's call, they would turn their heads and listen intently till the underbrush parted cautiously and another bird flitted up beside them. Then another call, and from the distant hillside a faint *kwit-kwit* and

a rush of wings in answer, and another partridge would shoot in on swift pinions to pull himself up on the log beside his fellows. The line would open hospitably to let him in; then the row grew quiet again, as the leader called, turning their heads from side to side for the faint answers.

There were nine on the log at last. The calling grew louder and louder; yet for several minutes now no answer came back. The flock grew uneasy; the leader ran from his log into the brush and back again, calling loudly, while a low chatter, the first break in their strange silence, ran back and forth through the family on the log. There were others to come; but where were they, and why did they tarry? It was growing late; already an owl had hooted, and the roosting place was still far away. *Prut, prut, pr-r-r-reee!* called the leader, and the chatter ceased as the whole flock listened.

I turned my head to the hillside to listen also for the laggards; but there was no answer. Save for the cry of a low-flying loon and the snap of a twig — too sharp and heavy for little feet to make — the woods were all silent. As I turned to the log again, something warm and heavy rested against my side. Then I knew; and with the knowledge came a swift thrill of regret that made me feel guilty and out of place in the

silent woods. The leader was calling, the silent flock were waiting for two of their number who would never answer the call again.

I lay scarcely ten yards from the log on which the sad little drama went on in the twilight shadows, while the great silence grew deep and deeper, as if the wilderness itself were in sympathy and ceased its cries to listen. Once, at the first glimpse of the group, I had raised my rifle and covered the head of the largest bird; but curiosity to know what they were doing held me back. Now a deeper feeling had taken its place; the rifle slid from my hand and lay unnoticed among the fallen leaves.

Again the leader called. The flock drew itself up, like a row of gray-brown statues, every eye bright, every ear listening, till some vague sense of fear and danger drew them together; and they huddled on the ground in a close group; all but the leader, who stood above them, counting them over and over, apparently, and anon sending his cry out into the darkening woods.

I took one of the birds out of my pocket and began to smooth the rumpled brown feathers. How beautiful he was, how perfectly adapted in form and color for the wilderness in which he had lived! And I had taken his life, the only thing he had. Its beauty and something deeper, which is the sad mystery of all life, were

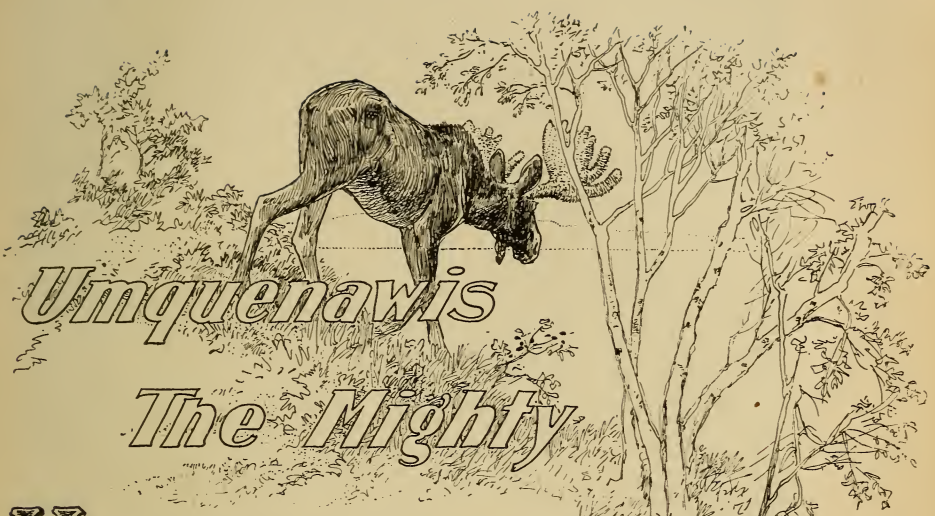
gone forever. All summer long he had run about on glad little feet, delighting in nature's abundance, calling brightly to his fellows as they glided in and out in eager search through the lights and shadows. Fear on the one hand, absolute obedience to his mother on the other, had been the two great factors of his life. Between them he grew strong, keen, alert, knowing perfectly when to run and when to fly and when to crouch motionless, as danger passed close with blinded eyes. Then when his strength was perfect, and he glided alone through the wilderness coverts in watchful self-dependence — a moment's curiosity, a quick eager glance at the strange animal standing so still under the cedar, a flash, a noise; and all was over. The call of the leader went searching, searching through the woods; but he gave no heed any more.

The hand had grown suddenly very tender as it stroked his feathers. I had taken his life; I must try to answer for him now. At the thought I raised my head and gave the clear *whit-kwit* of a running partridge. Instantly the leader answered; the flock sprang to the log again and turned their heads in my direction to listen. Another call, and now the flock dropped to the ground and lay close, while the leader drew himself up straight on the log and became part of a dead stub beside him.

Something was wrong in my call; the birds were suspicious, knowing not what danger had kept their fellows silent so long, and now threatened them out of the black alders. A moment's intent listening; then the leader stepped slowly down from his log and came towards me cautiously, halting, hiding, listening, gliding, swinging far out to one side and back again in stealthy advance, till he drew himself up abruptly at sight of my face peering out of the underbrush. For a long two minutes he never stirred so much as an eyelid. Then he glided swiftly back, with a faint, puzzled, questioning *kwit-kwit?* to where his flock were waiting. A low signal that I could barely hear, a swift movement — then the flock thundered away in scattered flight into the silent, friendly woods.

Ten minutes later I was crouched in some thick underbrush looking up into a great spruce, when I could just make out the leader standing by an upright branch in sharp silhouette against the glowing west. I had followed his swift flight, and now lay listening again to his searching call as it went out through the twilight, calling his little flock to the roosting tree. From the swamp and the hillside and far down by the quiet lake they answered, faintly at first, then with clearer call and the whirr of swift wings as they came in.

But already I had seen and heard enough; too much, indeed, for my peace of mind. I crept away through the swamp, the eager calls following me even to my canoe; first a plaint, as if something were lacking to the placid lake and quiet woods and the soft beauty of twilight; and then a faint question, always heard in the *kwit* of a partridge, as if only I could explain why two eager voices would never again answer to roll call when the shadows lengthened.



Unquenawis The Mighty

UMQUENAWIS the Mighty is lord of the woodlands. None other among the wood folk is half so great as he; none has senses so keen to detect a danger, nor powers so terrible to defend himself against it. So he fears nothing, moving through the big woods like a master; and when you see him for the first time in the wilderness pushing his stately, silent way among the giant trees, or plunging like a great engine through underbrush and over windfalls, his nose up to try the wind, his broad antlers far back on his mighty shoulders, while the dead tree that opposes him cracks and crashes

down before his rush, and the alders beat a rattling, snapping tattoo on his branching horns,— when you see him thus, something within you rises up, like a soldier at salute, and says: "Milord the Moose!" And though the rifle is in your hand, its deadly muzzle never rises from the trail.

That great head with its massive crown is too big for any house. Hung stupidly on a wall, in a room full of bric-a-brac, as you usually see it, with its shriveled ears that were once living trumpets, its bulging eyes that were once so small and keen, and its huge muzzle stretched out of all proportion, it is but misplaced, misshapen ugliness. It has no more, and scarcely any higher, significance than a scalp on the pole of a savage's wigwam. Only in the wilderness, with the irresistible push of his twelve-hundred pound, force-packed body behind it, the crackling underbrush beneath, and the lofty spruce aisles towering overhead, can it give the tingling impression of magnificent power which belongs to Umquenawis the Mighty in his native wilds. There only is his head at home; and only as you see it there, whether looking out in quiet majesty from a lonely point over a silent lake, or leading him in his terrific rush through the startled forest, will your heart ever jump and your nerves tingle in that swift thrill which stirs the sluggish blood to your very finger tips,

"PLUNGING LIKE A GREAT ENGINE THROUGH
UNDERBRUSH AND OVER WINDFALLS"

and sends you quietly back to camp with your soul at peace — well satisfied to leave Umquenawis where he is, rather than pack him home to your admiring friends in a freight car.

Though Umquenawis be lord of the wilderness, there are two things, and two things only, which he sometimes fears: the smell of man, and the spiteful crack of a rifle. For Milord the Moose has been hunted and has learned fear, which formerly he was stranger to. But when you go deep into the wilderness, where no hunter has ever gone, and where the bang of a rifle following the roar of a birch-bark trumpet has never broken the twilight stillness, there you may find him still, as he was before fear came; there he will come smashing down the mountain side at your call, and never circle to wind an enemy; and there, when the mood is on him, he will send you scrambling up the nearest tree for your life, as a squirrel goes when the fox is after him. Once, in such a mood, I saw him charge a little wiry guide, who went up a spruce tree with his snowshoes on; and never a bear did the trick quicker, spite of the four-foot webs in which his feet were tangled.

We were pushing upstream, late one afternoon, to the big lake at the headwaters of a wilderness river. Above the roar of rapids far behind, and the fret of

the current near at hand, the rhythmical *clunk*, *clunk* of the poles and the *lap*, *lap* of my little canoe as she breasted the ripples were the only sounds that broke the forest stillness. We were silent, as men always are to whom the woods have spoken their deepest message, and to whom the next turn of the river may bring its thrill of unexpected things.

Suddenly, as the bow of our canoe shot round a point, we ran plump upon a big cow moose crossing the river. At Simmo's grunt of surprise she stopped short and whirled to face us. And there she stood, one huge question mark from nose to tail, while the canoe edged in to the lee of a great rock and hung there quivering, with poles braced firmly on the bottom.

We were already late for camping, and the lake was still far ahead. I gave the word at last, after a few minutes' silent watching, and the canoe shot upward. But the big moose, instead of making off into the woods, as a well-behaved moose ought to do, splashed straight toward us. Simmo, in the bow, gave a sweeping flourish of his pole, and we all yelled in unison; but the moose came on steadily, quietly, bound to find out what the queer thing was that had just come up river and broken the solemn stillness.

"Bes' keep still; big moose make-um trouble sometime," muttered Noel behind me; and we dropped

back silently into the lee of the friendly rock, to watch awhile longer and let the big creature do as she would.

For ten minutes more we tried every kind of threat and persuasion to get the moose out of the way, ending at last by sending a bullet *zipping* into the water under her body; but beyond an angry stamp of the foot there was no response, and no disposition whatever to give us the stream. Then I bethought me of a trick that I had discovered long before by accident. Dropping down to the nearest bank, I crept up behind the moose, hidden in the underbrush, and began to break twigs, softly at first, then more and more sharply, as if something were coming through the woods fearlessly. At the first suspicious crack the moose whirled, hesitated, started nervously across the stream, twitching her nostrils and wigwagging her big ears to find out what the crackle meant, and hurrying more and more as the sounds grated harshly upon her sensitive nerves. Next moment the river was clear and our canoe was breasting the rippling shallows, while the moose watched us curiously, half hidden in the alders.

That is a good trick, for occasions. The animals all fear twig snapping. Only never try it at night, with a bull, in the calling season, as I did once unintentionally. Then he is apt to mistake you for his

tantalizing mate and come down on you like a tempest, giving you a big scare and a monkey scramble into the nearest tree before he is satisfied.

Within the next hour I counted seven moose, old and young, from the canoe; and when we ran ashore at twilight to the camping ground on the big lake, the tracks of an enormous bull were drawn sharply across our landing. The water was still trickling into them, showing that he had just vacated the spot at our approach.

How do I know it was a bull? At this season the bulls travel constantly, and the points of the hoofs are worn to a clean, even curve. The cows, which have been living in deep retirement all summer, teaching their ungainly calves the sounds and smells and lessons of the woods, travel much less; their hoofs, in consequence, are generally long and pointed and overgrown.

Two miles above our camp was a little brook, with an alder swale on one side and a dark, gloomy spruce tangle on the other — an ideal spot for a moose to keep her little school, I thought, when I discovered the place a few days later. There were tracks on the shore, plenty of them; and I knew I had only to watch long enough to see the mother and her calf, and to catch a glimpse, perhaps, of what no man has ever yet seen clearly; that is, a moose teaching her

little one how to hide his bulk; how to move noiselessly and undiscovered through underbrush where, one would think, a fox must make his presence known; how to take a windfall on the run; how to breast down a young birch or maple tree and keep it under his body while he feeds on the top, — and a score of other things that every moose must know before he is fit to take care of himself in the big woods.

I went there one afternoon in my canoe, grasped a few lily stems to hold the little craft steady, and snuggled down till only my head showed above the gunwales, so as to make canoe and man look as much like an old, wind-blown log as possible. It was getting toward the hour when I knew the cow would be hungry, but while it was yet too light to bring her little one to the open shore. After an hour's watching, the cow came cautiously down the brook. She stopped short at sight of the floating log; watched it steadily for two or three minutes, wigwagging her ears; then began to feed greedily on the lily pads that fringed all the shore. When she went back I followed, guided now by the crack of a twig, now by a swaying of brush tops, now by the flip of a nervous ear or the push of a huge dark body, keeping carefully to leeward all the time and making the big, unconscious creature guide me to where she had hidden her little one.

Just above me, and a hundred yards in from the shore, a tree had fallen, its bushy top bending down two small spruces and making a low den, so dark that an owl could scarcely have seen what was inside. "That's the spot," I told myself instantly; but the mother passed well above it, without noting apparently how good a place it was. Fifty yards farther on she turned and circled back, below the spot, trying the wind with ears and nose as she came on straight towards me.

"Aha! the old moose trick," I thought, remembering how a hunted moose never lies down to rest without first circling back for a long distance, parallel to his trail and to leeward, to find out from a safe distance whether anything is following him. When he lies down, at last, it will be close beside his trail, but hidden from it; so that he hears or smells you as you go by. And when you reach the place, far ahead, where he turned back he will be miles away, plunging along down wind at a pace that makes your snowshoe swing like a baby's toddle. So you camp where he lay down, and pick up the trail in the morning.

When the big cow turned and came striding back I knew that I should find her little one in the spruce den. But would she not find me, instead, and drive me out of her bailiwick? You can never be sure what

a moose will do if she finds you near her calf. Generally they run — always, in fact — but sometimes they run your way. And besides, I had been trying for years to see a mother moose teaching in her little school. Now I dropped on all fours and crawled away down wind, so as to get beyond ken of the mother's inquisitive nose if possible.

She came on steadily, moving with astonishing silence through the tangle, till she stood where I had been a moment before, when she started violently and threw her head up into the wind. Some scent of me was there, clinging faintly to the leaves and the moist earth. For a moment she stood like a rock, sifting the air in her nose; then, finding nothing in the wind, she turned slowly in my direction to use her ears and eyes. I was lying very still behind a mossy log by this time, and she did not see me. Suddenly she turned and called, a low bleat. There was an instant stir in the spruce den, an answering bleat, and a moose calf scrambled out and ran straight to the mother. There was an unvoiced command to silence that no human sense could understand. The mother put her great head down to earth — "Smell of that; mark that, and remember," she was saying in her own way; and the calf put his little head down beside hers, and I heard him sniff-sniffing the leaves. Then the mother

swung her head savagely, bunted the little fellow out of his tracks, and drove him hurriedly ahead of her away from the place — "Get out, hurry, danger!" was what she was saying now, and emphasizing her teaching with an occasional bunt from behind that lifted the calf over the hard places. So they went up the hill, the calf wondering and curious, yet ever reminded by the hard head at his flank that obedience was his business just now, the mother turning occasionally to sniff and listen, till they vanished silently among the dark spruces.

For a week or more I haunted the spot; but though I saw the pair occasionally, in the woods or on the shore, I learned no more of Umquenawis' secrets. The moose schools are kept in far-away, shady dingles beyond reach of inquisitive eyes. Then, one morning at daylight as my canoe shot round a grassy point, there were the mother and her calf standing knee-deep among the lily pads. With a yell I drove the canoe straight at the little one.

Now it takes a young moose or caribou a long time to learn that when sudden danger threatens he is to follow, not his own frightened head, but his mother's guiding tail. To young fawns this is practically the first thing taught by the mothers; but caribou are naturally stupid, or trustful, or burningly inquisitive,

according to their several dispositions; and moose, with their great strength, are naturally fearless; so that this needful lesson is slowly learned. If you surprise a mother moose or caribou with her young at close quarters and rush at them instantly, with a whoop or two to scatter their wits, the chances are that the mother will bolt into the brush, where safety lies, and the calf into the lake or along the shore, where the going is easiest.

Several times I have caught young moose and caribou in this way, either swimming or stogged in the mud, and after turning them back to shore have watched the mother's cautious return and her treatment of the lost one. Once I paddled up beside a young bull moose, half grown, and grasping the coarse hair on his back had him tow me a hundred yards, to the next point, while I studied his expression.

As my canoe shot up to the two moose they did exactly what I had expected; the mother bolted for the woods in mighty, floundering jumps, mud and water flying merrily about her; while the calf darted along the shore, got caught in the lily pads, and with a despairing bleat settled down in the mud of a soft place, up to his back, and turned his head to see what I was.

I ran my canoe ashore and approached the little fellow quietly, without hurry or excitement. Nose,

eyes, and ears questioned me; and his fear gradually changed to curiosity as he saw how harmless a thing had frightened him. He even tried to pull his awkward little legs out of the mud in my direction. Meanwhile the big mother moose was thrashing around in the bushes in a terrible swither, calling her calf to come.

I had almost reached the little fellow when the wind brought him the strong scent that he had learned in the woods a few days before, and he bleated sharply. There was an answering crash of brush, a pounding of hoofs that told one unmistakably to look out for his rear, and out of the bushes burst the mother, her eyes red as a wild pig's, and the long hair standing straight up along her back in a terrifying bristle. "Stand not upon the order of your mogging, but mog at once —*eeeunh! unh!*" she grunted; and I turned otter instantly and took to the lake, diving as soon as the depth allowed and swimming under water to escape the old fury's attention. There was little need of fine tactics, however, as I found out when my head appeared again cautiously. Anything in the way of an unceremonious retreat of the enemy satisfied her as perfectly as if she had been a Boer general. She went straight to her calf, thrust her great head under his belly, hiked him roughly out of the mud, and then butted him ahead of her into the bushes.

It was stern, rough discipline; but the youngster needed it to teach him the wisdom of the woods. From a distance I watched the quivering line of brush tops that marked their course, and then followed softly. When I found them again, in the twilight of the great spruces, the mother was licking the sides of her calf, lest he should grow cold too suddenly after his unwonted bath. All the fury and harshness were gone. Her great head lowered tenderly over the foolish, ungainly youngster, tonguing him, caressing him, drying and warming his poor sides, telling him in mother language that it was all right now, and that next time he would do better.

There were other moose on the lake, all of them as uncertain as the big cow and her calf. Probably most of them had never seen a man before our arrival, and it kept one's expectations on tiptoe to know what they would do when they saw the strange two-legged creature for the first time. If a moose smelled me before I saw him, he would make off quietly into the woods, as all wild creatures do, and watch from a safe distance. But if I stumbled upon him unexpectedly, when the wind brought no warning to his nostrils, he was fearless, usually, and full of curiosity.

The worst of them all was the big bull whose tracks were on the shore when we arrived. He was a morose, ugly old brute, living apart by himself, with his temper always on edge ready to bully anything that dared to cross his path or question his lordship. Whether he was an outcast, grown surly from living too much alone, or whether he bore some old bullet wound to account for his hostility to man, I could never find out. Far down the river a hunter had been killed, ten years before, by a bull moose that he had wounded; and this may have been, as Noel declared, the same animal, cherishing his resentment with a memory as merciless as an Indian's.

Before we had found this out I stumbled upon the big bull one afternoon, and came near paying the penalty of my ignorance. I had been still-fishing for togue (lake trout), and was on my way back to camp when, doubling a point, I ran plump upon a bull moose feeding among the lily pads. My approach had been perfectly silent, — that is the only way to see things in the woods, — and he was quite unconscious that anybody but himself was near.

He would plunge his great head under water till only his antler tips showed, and nose around on the bottom till he found a lily root. With a heave and a jerk he would drag it out, and stand chewing it

endwise with huge satisfaction, while the muddy water trickled down over his face. When it was all eaten he would grope under the lily pads for another root in the same way.

Without thinking much of the possible risk, I began to steal towards him. While his head was under I would work the canoe along silently, simply "rolling the paddle" without lifting it from the water. At the first lift of his antlers I would stop and sit low in the canoe till he finished his juicy morsel and ducked for more. Then one could slip along easily again without being discovered.

Two or three times this was repeated successfully, and still the big, unconscious brute, facing away from me fortunately, had no idea that he was being watched. His head went under water again — not so deep this time; but I was too absorbed in the pretty game to notice that he had found the end of a root above the mud, and that his ears were out of water. A ripple from the bow of my canoe, or perhaps the faint brush of a lily leaf against the side, reached him. His head burst out of the pads unexpectedly; with a snort and a mighty flounder he whirled upon me; and there he stood quivering, ears, eyes, nose, — everything about him reaching out to me and shooting questions at my head with an insistence that demanded instant answer.

I kept quiet, though I was altogether too near the big brute for comfort, till an unfortunate breeze brushed the bow of my canoe still nearer to where he stood, threatening now instead of questioning. The mane on his back began to bristle, and I knew that I had but a small second in which to act. To get speed I swung the bow of the canoe outward, instead of backing away. The movement brought me a trifle nearer, yet gave me a chance to shoot by him. At the first sudden motion he leaped; the red fire blazed out in his eyes, and he plunged straight at the canoe — one, two splashing jumps, and the huge velvet antlers were shaking just over me and the deadly fore foot was raised for a blow.

I rolled over on the instant, startling the brute with a yell as I did so, and upsetting the canoe between us. There was a splintering crack behind me as I struck out for deep water. When I turned, at a safe distance, the bull had driven one sharp hoof through the bottom of the upturned canoe, and was now trying awkwardly to pull his leg out from the clinging cedar ribs. He seemed frightened at the queer, dumb thing that gripped his foot, for he grunted and jumped back and thrashed his big antlers in excitement; but he was getting madder every minute.

To save the canoe from being pounded to pieces was now the only pressing business on hand. All other

considerations took to the winds in the thought that, if the bull's fury increased and he leaped upon the canoe, as he does when he means to kill, one jump would put the frail thing beyond repair, and we should have to face the dangerous river below in a spruce bark of our own building. I swam quickly to the shore and splashed and shouted and then ran away to attract the bull's attention. He came after me on the instant — *unh! unh! chock, chockety-chock!* till he was close enough for discomfort, when I took to water again. The bull followed, deeper and deeper, till his sides were awash. The bottom was muddy and he trod gingerly; but there was no fear of his swimming after me. He knows his limits, and they stop him shoulder deep.

When he would follow no farther I swam to the canoe and tugged it out into deep water. Umquenawis stood staring now in astonishment at the sight of this queer man-fish. The red light died out of his eyes for the first time, and his ears wigwagged like flags in the wind. He made no effort to follow, but stood as he was, shoulder deep, staring, wondering, till I landed on the point above, whipped the canoe over, and spilled the water out of it.

The paddle was still fast to its cord — as it should always be in trying experiments — and I tossed it into the canoe. The rattle roused Umquenawis from his

wonder, as if he had heard the challenging clack of antlers on the alder stems. He floundered out in mighty jumps and came swinging along the shore, *chocking* and grunting fiercely. He had seen the man again and knew it was no fish — *Unh! unh! eeeeeunh-unh!* he grunted, with a twisting, jerky wriggle of his neck and shoulders at the last squeal, as if he felt me already beneath his hoofs. But before he reached the point I had stuffed my flannel shirt into the hole in the canoe and was safely afloat once more. He followed along the shore till he heard the sound of voices at camp, when he turned instantly and vanished in the woods.

A few days later I saw the grumpy old brute again in a curious way. I was sweeping the lake with my field glasses when I saw what I thought was a pair of black ducks near a grassy shore. I paddled over, watching them keenly, till a root seemed to rise out of the water between them. Before I could get my glasses adjusted again they had disappeared. I dropped the glasses and paddled faster. They were diving, perhaps — an unusual thing for black ducks — and I might surprise them. There they were again; and there again was the old root bobbing up unexpectedly between them. I whipped my glasses up — the mystery vanished. The two ducks were the tips of Umquenawis'

big antlers; the root that rose between them was his head, as he came up to breathe.

It was a close, sultry afternoon; the flies and mosquitos were out in myriads, and Umquenawis had taken a philosophical way of getting rid of them. He was lying in the water, over a bed of mud, his body completely submerged. As the swarm of flies that pestered him rose to his head he would sink it slowly, drowning them off. Through my glass, as I drew near, I could see a cloud of them hovering above the wavelets, or covering the exposed antlers. After a few moments there would be a bubbling grumble down in the mud, as Umquenawis blew the air from his great lungs. His head would come up lazily to breathe among the popping bubbles; the flies would settle upon him like a cloud, and he would disappear again, blinking sleepily as he went down, with an air of immense satisfaction.

It seemed too bad to disturb such comfort; but I wanted to know more about the surly old tyrant that had treated me with such scant courtesy; so I stole near him again, running up when his head disappeared, and lying quiet whenever he came up to breathe. He saw me at last when I was quite near, and leaped up with a terrible start. There was fear in his eyes this time. Here was the man-fish again, the creature that lived on land or water, and that could approach him so

silently that the senses in which he had always trusted gave him no warning. He stared hard for a moment; then as the canoe glided rapidly straight towards him without fear or hesitation he waded out, stopping every instant to turn, and look, and try the wind, till he reached the fringe of woods beyond the grasses. There he thrust his nose up ahead of him, laid his big antlers back on his shoulders, and plowed straight through the tangle like a great engine, the alders snapping and crashing merrily about him as he went.

In striking contrast was the next meeting. I was out at midnight, jacking, and passed close by a point where I had often seen the big bull's tracks. He was not there, and I closed the jack and went on along the shore, listening for any wood folk that might be abroad. When I came back, a few minutes later, there was a suspicious ripple on the point. I opened the jack, and there was Umquenawis, my big bull, standing out huge and magnificent against the shadowy background, his eyes glowing and flashing in fierce wonder at the sudden brightness. He had passed along the shore within twenty yards of me, through dense underbrush, — as I found out from his tracks next morning, — yet so silently did he push his great bulk through the trees, halting, listening, trying the ground at every step for telltale twigs ere he put his weight down, that I had

heard no sound, though I was listening intently in the dead hush that was on the lake.

It may have been curiosity, or the uncomfortable sense of being watched and followed by the man-fish, who neither harmed nor feared him, that brought Umquenawis at last to our camp to investigate. One day Noel was washing some clothes of mine in the lake when some subtle warning made him turn his head. There stood the big bull, half hidden by the dwarf spruces, watching him intently. On the instant Noel left the duds where they were and bolted along the shore under the bushes, calling me loudly to come quick and bring my rifle. When we went back Umquenawis had trodden the clothes into the mud, and vanished as silently as he came.

The Indians grew insistent at this, telling me of the hunter that had been killed, claiming now, beyond a doubt, that this was the same bull, and urging me to kill the ugly brute and rid the woods of a positive danger. But Umquenawis was already learning the fear of me, and I thought the lesson might be driven home before the summer was ended. So it was; but before that time there was almost a tragedy.

One day a timber cruiser — a lonely, silent man with the instincts of an animal for finding his way in the woods, whose business it is to go over timber lands to

select the best sites for future cutting — came up to the lake and, not knowing that we were there, pitched by a spring a mile or two below us. I saw the smoke of his camp fire from the lake, where I was fishing, and wondered who had come into the great solitude. That was in the morning. Towards twilight I went down to bid the stranger welcome and to invite him to share our camp, if he would. I found him stiff and sore by his fire, eating raw-pork sandwiches with the appetite of a wolf. Almost at the same glance I saw the ground about a tree torn up, and the hoof marks of a big bull moose all about. —

"Hello! friend, what's up?" I hailed him.

"Got a rifle?" he demanded, with a rich Irish burr in his voice, paying no heed to my question. When I nodded he bolted for my canoe, grabbed my rifle, and ran away into the woods.

"Queer Dick! unbalanced, perhaps, by living too much alone in the woods," I thought, and took to examining the torn ground and the bull's tracks to find out for myself what had happened.

But there was no queerness in the frank, kindly face that met mine when the stranger came out of the bush a half hour later. —

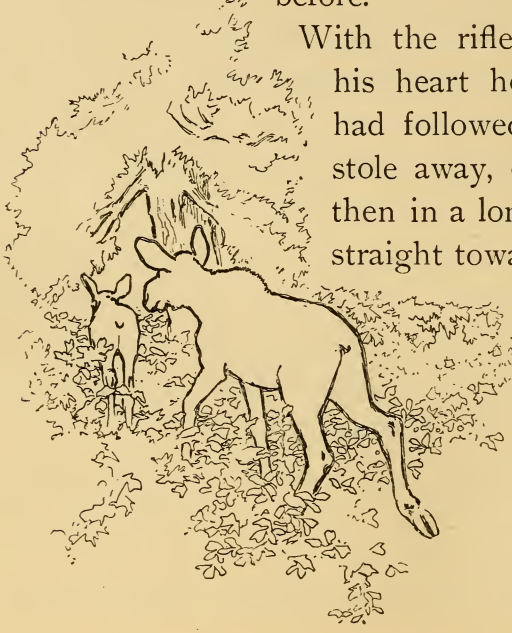
"Th' ould baste! he 's had me perrched up in that three there, like a blackburrd, the last tin hours; an'

niver a song in me throat or a bite in me stomach. He wint just as you came — I thought I could returrn his compliments wid a bullet," he said, apologetically, as he passed me back the rifle.

Then, sitting by his fire, he told me his story. He had just lit his fire that morning, and was taking off his wet stockings to dry them, when there was a fierce crashing and grunting behind him, and a bull moose charged out of the bushes like a fury. The cruiser jumped and dodged; then, as the bull whirled again, he swung himself into a tree and sat there astride a limb, while the bull grunted and pushed and hammered the ground below with his sharp hoofs. All day long the moose had kept up the siege, now drawing off cunningly to hide in the bushes, now charging out savagely as the timber cruiser made effort to come down from his uncomfortable perch.

A few minutes before my approach a curious thing happened; which seems to indicate, as do many other things in the woods, that certain animals — perhaps all animals, including man — have at times an unknown sixth sense, for which there is no name and no explanation. I was still half a mile or more away, hidden by a point and paddling silently straight into the wind. No possible sight or sound or smell of me could have reached any known sense of any animal;

yet the big brute began to grow uneasy. He left his stand under the tree and circled nervously around it, looking, listening, wigwagging his big ears, trying the wind at every step, and setting his hoofs down as if he trod on dynamite. Suddenly he turned and vanished silently into the brush. McGarven, the timber cruiser, who had no idea that there was any man but himself on the lake, watched the bull with growing wonder and distrust, thinking him possessed of some evil demon. In his long life in the woods he had met hundreds of moose, but had never been molested before.



With the rifle at full cock and his heart hot within him, he had followed the trail, which stole away, cautiously at first, then in a long swinging stride straight towards the mountain. —"Oh, 't is the quare baste he is altogether!" he said as he finished his story.

AT THE SOUND OF THE TRUMPET

IT was now near the calling season, and the nights grew keen with excitement. Now and then as I fished, or followed the brooks, or prowled through the woods in the late afternoon, the sudden bellow of a cow moose would break upon the stillness, so strange and uncertain in the thick coverts that I could rarely describe, much less imitate, the sound, or even tell the direction whence it had come. Under the dusk of the lake shore I would sometimes come upon a pair of the huge animals, the cow restless, wary, impatient, the bull now silent as a shadow, now ripping and

rasping the torn velvet from his great antlers among the alders, and now threatening and browbeating every living thing that crossed his trail, and even the unoffending bushes, in his testy humor.

One night I went to the landing just below my tent with Simmo and tried for the first time the long call of the cow moose. He and Noel refused absolutely to give it, unless I should agree to shoot the ugly old bull at sight. Several times of late they had seen him near our camp, or had crossed his deep trail on the nearer shores, and they were growing superstitious as well as fearful.

There was no answer to our calling for the space of an hour; silence brooded like a living, watchful thing over sleeping lake and forest, a silence that grew only deeper and deeper after the last echoes of the bark trumpet had rolled back on us from the distant mountain. Suddenly Simmo lowered the horn, just as he had raised it to his lips for a call.

"Moose near!" he whispered.

"How do you know?" I breathed; for I had heard nothing.

"Don' know how; just know," he said sullenly. An Indian hates to be questioned, as a wild animal hates to be watched. As if in confirmation of his opinion, there was a startling crash and plunge across the little

bay over against us, and a bull moose leaped the bank into the lake within fifty yards of where we crouched on the shore.

"Shoot! shoot-um quick!" cried Simmo; and the fear of the old bull was in his voice.

For answer there came a grunt from the moose — a ridiculously small, squeaking grunt, like the voice of a penny trumpet — as the huge creature swung rapidly along the shore in our direction.

"Uh! young bull, lil fool moose," whispered Simmo, and breathed a soft, questioning *Whooowuh?* through the bark horn to bring him nearer.

He came close to where we were hidden, then entered the woods and circled silently about our camp to get our wind. In the morning his tracks, within five feet of my rear tent pole, showed how little he cared for the dwelling of man. But though he circled back and forth for an hour, answering Simmo's low call with his ridiculous little grunt, he would not show himself again on the open shore.

I stole up after a while to where I had heard the last twig snap under his hoofs. Simmo held me back, whispering of danger; but there was a question in my head which has never received a satisfactory answer: Why does a bull come to a call anyway? It is held generally — and with truth, I think — that he comes

because he thinks the sound is made by a cow moose. But how his keen ears could mistake such a palpable fraud is the greatest mystery in the woods. I have heard a score of hunters and Indians call, all differently, and have sometimes brought a bull into the open at the wail of my own bark trumpet; but I have never yet listened to a call that has any resemblance to the bellow of a cow moose as I have often heard it in the woods. Nor have I ever heard, or ever met anybody who has heard, a cow moose give forth any sound like the "long call" which is made by hunters, and which is used successfully to bring the bull from a distance.

Others claim, and with some reason, that the bull, more fearless and careless at this season than at other times, comes merely to investigate the sound, as he and most other wild creatures do with every queer or unknown thing they hear. The Alaskan Indians stretch a skin into a kind of tambourine and beat it with a club to call a bull; which sound, however, might not be unlike one of the many peculiar bellows that I have heard from cow moose in the wilderness. And I have twice known bulls to come to the *chuck* of an ax on a block; which sound, at a distance, has some resemblance to the peculiar *chock-chocking* that the bulls use to call their mates from a distance.

From any point of view the thing has contradictions enough to make one wary of a too positive opinion. Here at hand was a "lil fool moose" who knew no fear, and who might, therefore, enlighten me on the obscure subject. I told Simmo to keep on calling softly at intervals while I crept up into the woods to watch the effect.

It was all as dark as a pocket beyond the open shore. One had to feel his way along, and imitate the moose himself in putting his feet down. Spite of my precaution a bush whispered; a twig cracked. Instantly there was a swift answering rustle ahead as the bull glided towards me. He had heard the faint message and was coming to see if it were not his tantalizing mate, ready to whack her soundly, according to his wont, for causing him so much worry, and to beat her out ahead of him to the open where he could watch her closely and prevent any more of her hiding tricks.

I stood motionless behind a tree, grasping a branch above, ready to swing up out of reach when the bull charged. A vague black hulk thrust itself out of the dark woods, close in front of me, and stood still. Against the faint light, which showed from the lake through the fringe of trees, the great head and antlers stood out like an upturned root; but I had never known that a living creature stood there were it not

for a soft, clucking rumble that the bull kept going in his throat, — a ponderous kind of love note, intended, no doubt, to let his elusive mate know that he was near.

He took another step in my direction, brushing the leaves softly, a low, whining grunt telling of his impatience. Two more steps and he must have discovered me, when fortunately an appealing gurgle and a measured *plop*, *plop*, *plop* — like the feet of a moose falling in shallow water — sounded from the shore below, where Simmo was concealed. Instantly the bull turned and glided away, a shadow among the shadows. A few minutes later I heard him running off in the direction whence he had first come.

After that the twilight always found him near our camp. He was convinced that there was a mate hiding somewhere near, and he was bound to find her. We had only to call a few times from our canoe, or from the shore, and presently we would hear him coming, blowing his penny trumpet, and at last see him break out upon the shore with a crashing plunge to waken all the echoes. Then, one night as we lay alongside a great rock in deep shadow, watching the puzzled young bull as he ranged along the shore in the moonlight, Simmo grunted softly to call him nearer. At the sound a larger bull, that we had not suspected, leaped out of the bushes close beside us with a sudden

terrifying plunge and splashed straight at the canoe. Only the quickest kind of work saved us. Simmo swung the bow off, with a startled grunt of his own, and I paddled away; while the bull, mistaking us in the dim light for the exasperating cow that had been calling and hiding herself for a week, followed after us into deep water.

There was no doubt whatever that this moose, at least, had come to what he thought was the call of a mate. Moonlight is deceptive beyond a few feet; so when the low grunt sounded in the shadow of the great rock he was sure he had found the coy creature at last, and broke out of his concealment resolved to keep her in sight and not to let her get away again. That is why he swam after us. Had he been investigating some new sound or possible danger, he would never have left the land, where alone his great power and his wonderful senses have full play. In the water he is harmless, as most other wild creatures are.

I paddled cautiously just ahead of him, so near that, looking over my shoulder, I could see the flash of his eye and the waves crinkling away before the push of his great nose. After a short swim he grew suspicious of the queer thing that kept just so far ahead, whether he swam fast or slow, and turned in towards the shore whining his impatience. I followed slowly, letting him

get some distance ahead, and just as his feet struck bottom whispered to Simmo for his softest call. At the sound the bull whirled and plunged after us again recklessly, and I led him across to where the younger bull was still ranging up and down the shore, calling imploringly to his phantom mate.

I expected a battle when the two rivals should meet; but they paid little attention to each other. The common misfortune, or the common misery, seemed to kill the fierce natural jealousy whose fury I had more than once been witness of. They had lost all fear by this time; they ranged up and down the shore, or smashed recklessly through the swamps, as the elusive smells and echoes called them hither and yon in their frantic search.

Far up on the mountain side the sharp, challenging grunt of a master bull broke out of the startled woods in one of the lulls of our exciting play. Simmo heard and turned in the bow to whisper excitedly: "Nother bull! Fetch-um Ol' Dev'l this time, sartin." Raising his horn he gave the long, rolling bellow of a cow moose. A fiercer trumpet call from the mountain side answered; then the sound was lost in the *crash-crash* of the first two bulls, as they broke out upon the shore on opposite sides of the canoe.

We gave little heed now to the nearer play; our whole attention was fixed on a hoarse, grunting roar

'A MIGHTY SPRING OF HIS CROUCHING HAUNCHES FINISHED THE WORK"

— *Uh, uh, uh! eeeyuh! r-r-r-runh-unh!* — with a rattling, snapping crash of underbrush for an accompaniment. The younger bull heard it; listened for a moment, like a great black statue under the moonlight; then he glided away into the shadows under the bank. The larger bull heard it, threw up his great head defiantly, and came swinging along the shore, hurling a savage challenge back on the echoing woods at every stride.

There was an ominous silence up on the ridge where, a moment before, all was fierce commotion. Simmo was silent too; the uproar had been appalling, with the sleeping lake below us, and the vast forest, where silence dwells at home, stretching up and away on every hand to the sky line. But the spirit of mischief was tingling all over me as I seized the horn and gave the low appealing grunt that a cow would have uttered under the same circumstances. Like a shot the answer was hurled back, and down came the great bull — smash, crack, *r-r-runh!* till he burst like a tempest out on the open shore, where the second bull with a challenging roar leaped to meet him.

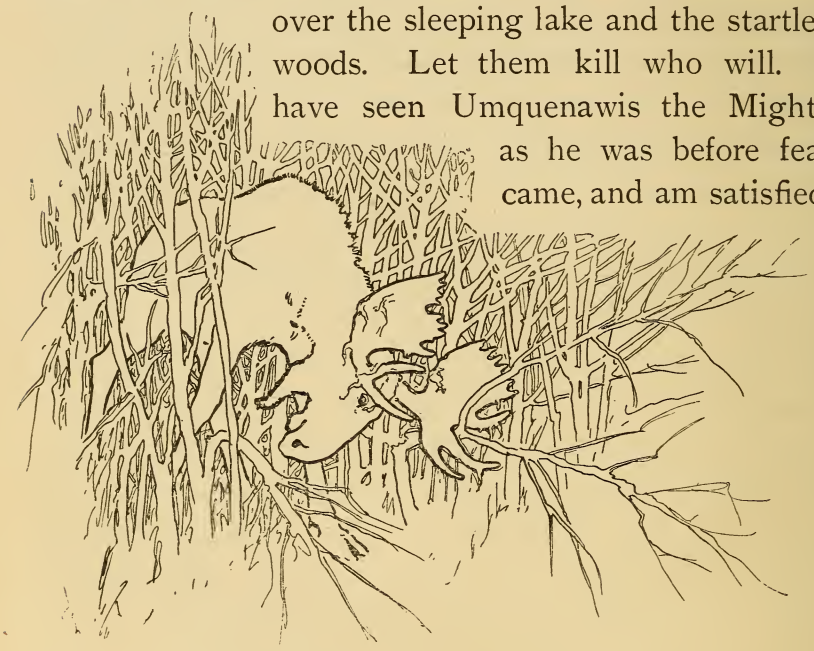
Simmo was begging me to shoot, shoot, telling me excitedly that " Ol' Dev'l," as he called him, would be more dangerous now than ever, if I let him get away; but I only drove the canoe in closer to the splashing, grunting uproar among the shadows under the bank.

There was a terrific duel under way when I swung the canoe alongside a moment later. The bulls crashed together with a shock to break their heads. Mud and water flew over them; their great antlers clashed and rang like metal blades as they pushed and tugged, grunting like demons in the fierce struggle. But the contest was too one-sided to last long. The big bull that had almost killed me, but in whom I now found myself taking an almost savage pride, had smashed down from the mountain in a frightful rage, and with a power that nothing could resist. With a quick lunge he locked antlers in the grip he wanted; a twist of his massive neck and shoulders forced the opposing head aside, and a mighty spring of his crouching haunches finished the work. The second moose went over with a plunge like a bolt-struck pine. As he rolled up to his feet again the savage old bull jumped for him and drove the brow antlers into his flanks. The next moment both bulls had crashed away into the woods, one swinging off in giant strides through the crackling underbrush for his life, the other close behind, charging like a battering-ram into his enemy's rear, grunting like a huge wild boar in his rage and exultation. So the chase vanished over the ridge into the valley beyond; and silence stole back, like a Chinese empress, into her disturbed dominions.

From behind a great windfall on the point above, where he had evidently been watching the battle, the first young bull stole out, and came halting and listening along the shore to the scene of the conflict. "To the discreet belong the spoils" was written in every timorous step and stealthy movement. A low grunt from my horn reassured him; he grew confident. Now he would find the phantom mate that had occasioned so much trouble, and run away with her before the conqueror should return from his chase. He swung along rapidly, rumbling the low call in his throat. Then up on the ridge sounded again the crackle of brush and the roar of a challenge. Rage had not made the victor to forget; indeed, here he was, coming back swiftly for his reward. On the instant all confidence vanished from the young bull's attitude. He slipped away into the woods. There was no sound; scarcely a definite motion. A shadow seemed to glide away into the darker shadows. The underbrush closed softly behind it, and he was gone.

Next morning at daybreak I found my old bull on the shore, a mile below; and with him was the great cow that had hunted me away from her little one. The youngster was well grown and sturdy now, but still he followed his mother obediently; and the big bull had taken them both under his protection. I left

them there undisturbed, with a thought of the mighty offspring that shall some day come smashing down from the mountain to delight the heart of camper or hunter and set his nerves a-tingle, when the lake shall again be visited and the roar of a bark trumpet roll over the sleeping lake and the startled woods. Let them kill who will. I have seen Umquenawis the Mighty as he was before fear came, and am satisfied.



GLOSSARY OF INDIAN NAMES

Cheokhes, *chē-ok-hĕs′*, the mink.
Cheplahgan, *chep-lâh′gan*, the bald eagle.
Ch'geegee-lokh-sis, *ch'gee-gee′lock-sis*, the chickadee.
Chigwooltz, *chig-wooltz′*, the bullfrog.
Clóte Scarpe, a legendary hero, like Hiawatha, of the Northern Indians. Pronounced variously, Clote Scarpe, Groscap, Gluscap, etc.
Commoosie, *com-moo-sie′*, a little shelter, or hut, of boughs and bark.
Deedeeaskh, *dee-dee′ask*, the blue jay.
Eleemos, *el-ee′mos*, the fox.
Hawahak, *hâ-wâ-hăk′*, the hawk.
Hukweem, *huk-weem′*, the great northern diver, or loon.
Ismaques, *iss-mâ-ques′*, the fishhawk.
Kagax, *kăg′ăx*, the weasel.
Kakagos, *kâ-kâ-gŏs′*, the raven.
K'dunk, *k'dunk′*, the toad.
Keeokuskh, *kee-o-kusk′*, the muskrat.
Keeonekh, *kee′o-nek*, the otter.
Killooleet, *kil′loo-leet*, the white-throated sparrow.
Kookooskoos, *koo-koo-skoos′*, the great horned owl.
Koskomenos, *kŏs′kŏm-e-nŏs′*, the kingfisher.
Kupkawis, *cup-ka̤′wis*, the barred owl.
Kwaseekho, *kwâ-seek′ho*, the sheldrake.
Lhoks, *locks*, the panther.
Malsun, *măl′sun*, the wolf.
Meeko, *meek′ō*, the red squirrel.
Megaleep, *meg′â-leep*, the caribou.
Milicete, *mil′ĭ-cete*, the name of an Indian tribe; written also Malicete.
Mitches, *mit′chĕs*, the birch partridge, or ruffed grouse.
Moktaques, *mok-tâ′ques*, the hare.

Mooween, *moo-ween′*, the black bear.
Musquash, *mus′quâsh*, the muskrat.
Nemox, *nĕm′ox*, the fisher.
Pekquam, *pek-wăm′*, the fisher.
Quoskh, *quoskh*, the blue heron.
Seksagadagee, *sek′sâ-gā-dâ′gee*, the Canada grouse, or spruce partridge.
Skooktum, *skook′tum*, the trout.
Tookhees, *tôk′hees*, the wood mouse.
Umquenawis, *um-que-nâ′wis*, the moose.
Unk Wunk, *unk′ wunk*, the porcupine.
Upweekis, *up-week′iss*, the Canada lynx.

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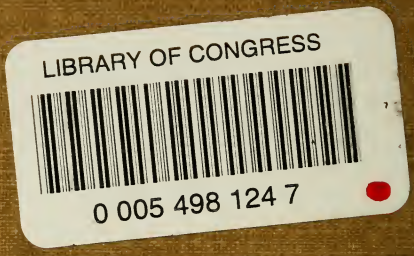
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